## Overtourism and the marketing of smart tourism destinations

**Guest Editor: J. Andres Coca-Stefaniak**

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Marketing smart tourism cities – a strategic dilemma

Introduction: are smart tourism cities counterproductive to memorable visitor experiences?

There is a growing consensus among scholars in neuroscience with regard to the adverse effects of technology on the cognitive functions of the human brain (Loh and Kanai, 2016). These include the processing of emotions, memory and the storage of lived experiences. In fact, this has been shown to be particularly applicable to regular users of smartphone-based mobile applications (Wilmer et al., 2017). Rather worryingly for today’s prevalently technology-based conception of what a smart tourism destination should deliver, recent research has shown that visitors’ intentions to preserve the memories of a visit to a tourism attraction by engaging with mobile media (e.g. taking photos and sharing them with others via social media) during their visit may actually prevent those same visitors (though perhaps not the recipients of their photos via social media) from remembering the very experience they are trying to preserve (Tamir et al., 2018; see also Soares and Storm, 2018). Furthermore, research has also shown that this “hyperconnected” state of affairs may be altogether detrimental to visitors’ enjoyment of the overall experience (Barasch et al., 2017). For those tourists who can still boast an adequate level of battery charge on their smartphones after a busy visit spent updating social media profiles with new photos whilst trying to simultaneously absorb the multi-sensory experience offered by the tourist attraction, there is further bad news. Similar neurological research has shown that people who are over-reliant on satellite navigation systems for way-finding (say, back to the hotel or to a restaurant highly rated on TripAdvisor) tend to perform worse at finding their way in the absence of their digital aid than those who rely on paper maps (McCullough and Collins, 2019). Parallel research in tourism has argued that this “smart” technology-enabled tourist may run the risk of alienation (or “e-lienation”, to use the term coined by Tribe and Mkono, 2017) from their surroundings and missing out on potentially enriching experiences offered by the tourism destination. All in all, this should be rather worrying news for aspiring and existing smart tourism destinations. Why? Well, given that memorable experiences remain arguably a desirable goal in the design and delivery of visitor experiences, it appears that technology could be actually conspiring to rewire our brains in the opposite direction (Ward, 2013). Should, then, smart tourist destinations strive to become more efficient at delivering other services instead of memorable experiences? Maybe, though this is perhaps particularly applicable to some of the earlier models in the smart cities longitudinal spectrum. In fact, there is growing consensus around the fact that technological innovation (Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019; Skelli and Schmid, 2019) can alleviate some of the effects of overtourism, particularly in the context of smart tourism destinations (Gretez and Scarpino-Johns, 2018). This includes “smarter” transport solutions, even if we know that residents and tourists will differ considerably in their assessment of urban mobility improvements (Albalate and Bel, 2010). However, all this is part of what smart cities (presumably) do already. Consequently, if the whole raison d’être of the “smart” concept applied to tourism destinations rests mainly on the proviso of experience design and delivery, where do the insights from the latest neurological research leave smart tourism destinations? Should the next generation of smart tourism destinations re-consider their strategic focus altogether?

This special issue of the International Journal of Tourism Cities (IJTC) on “Overtourism and the Marketing of Smart Tourism Destinations” attempts to shed light not only on the overtourism phenomena but also on a nascent field of research: the marketing and branding of smart urban tourism destinations. Inevitably, and given that both topics can hardly be considered in isolation,
much of the research showcased in this special issue, including this editorial, explore also elements spanning the overtourism phenomena and the marketing and management of smart tourism destinations, chiefly from an urban perspective.

Are overtourism and smartness linked in the development of global tourism cities?

As things stand, there is probably insufficient empirical evidence yet to deliver a categorical answer to what would appear to be a relatively intuitive question. Incidentally, many of the global tourism cities displaying symptoms of overtourism (e.g. Berlin, Barcelona, Venice, Amsterdam, Prague, Rome, etc.) are also cities with proven smart tourism credentials. However, as Dodds and Butler point out in their literature review of longitudinal issues in tourism development (“The phenomena of overtourism: a review”), overtourism remains a complex issue often focussed on very specific locations within global tourism cities. Some of these major mobility nodes and/or bottlenecks (e.g. canals, key bridges and major avenues) often bring to the forefront the conflicting mobility needs of residents vs tourists. In this respect, Bouchon and Rauscher (“Cities and tourism, a love and hate story; towards a conceptual framework for urban overtourism management”) argue succinctly that issues such as urban morphology and the branding strategies of urban tourism destinations can have a major impact on overtourism sentiment. However, they also offer a conceptual framework for the management of overtourism, which hints at a more pro-active role for smart tourism destinations in this arena and advocates implicitly the need to future-proof tourism destinations against overtourism. In an analysis of insights provided by European destination managers, Eckert et al. (“Strategies and measures directed towards overtourism: a perspective of European DMOs”) suggest this could be achieved through more effective leadership provided by destination management organisations (“Strategies and measures directed towards overtourism: a perspective of European DMOs”). However, this leadership needs to be grounded in a clear competence framework for the management of destinations, as Jamieson points out adopting a heritage management perspective on the development of urban tourism destinations (“Overtourism management competencies in Asian urban heritage areas”). Of course, competencies and leadership would be of limited use to effective decision making without the availability of real-time data and trends, which are crucial to processes related to the planning, development and integrated management of tourism destinations. Although tracking technologies and the analysis (and prediction) of tourist footfall have been well documented in the tourism literature (Shoval and Ahas, 2016), often from a capacity management perspective, much of this work has been carried out at a very localised level (e.g. festivals, cities and theme parks). Given trends towards a more networked (and regional) approach to the management of smart tourism destinations beyond urban hubs and incorporating smaller towns and attractions nearby (Coca-Stefaniak and Seisdedos, forthcoming) and growing consensus with regard to the fact that tourism should be treated as an open system (Morrison et al., 2018), this is likely to remain a major area of research as well as an opportunity for smart tourism destinations to engage in big data analysis that can then inform increasingly sophisticated destination marketing initiatives.

In spite of the undeniable importance of effective leadership, competencies and reliable data when devising local solutions to issues arising from largely global trends, creativity and creative thinking remain aspects seldom explored in the context of innovation for smart tourism destinations. Trinchini et al. (“Creativity, innovation and smartness in destination branding”) explore this conceptually by discussing the role of creativity as a crucial driver of innovation in the design of people-centred smart tourism destination branding strategies. Yet, in spite of the often much lauded new generation of people-centred (otherwise known, perhaps rather clumsily, as “human-centred”) smart cities and smart tourism destinations, the role of children in this process has been rather neglected by scholars and largely under-researched. Seraphin and Green attempt to redress this balance with their study of “The significance of the contribution of children to conceptualising the destination of the future”, where they explore children’s vision(s) of the destination of the future using Winchester (UK) as a case study. Crucially, and certainly in line with the earlier argument for the need of more creativity in the design of smart tourism destination branding strategies, the authors find that an ambidextrous management approach balancing metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design may be key to addressing the needs and wants of future generations of customers and visitors. This duality
becomes similarly apparent in the survey data analysis of hotel guests presented by Ballina et al. ("The phygital experience in the smart tourism destination") in the context of the use of information and communication technologies in the design of interactive visitor experiences beyond the mainly information-focussed services offered by many of today’s smart tourism destinations.

Inevitably, issues of co-management and co-design are also at the forefront of research in smart city management and the development of new initiatives in smart tourism destinations. Even if these issues permeate implicitly the arguments of many of the articles published in this special issue, they are particularly well illustrated in the case study presented by Fabry and Blanchet ("Monaco’s struggle to become a smart destination"), which explores the relationship between the smart city and the smart tourism destination and concludes that the support of local residents for smart innovation initiatives is key to their success. Similarly, Plichta ("Co-management and stakeholder theory as a useful approach to manage the problem of overtourism in historical cities – illustrated with an example of Krakow") reaches analogous conclusions with regard to the significance of cooperative processes in the design and implementation of initiatives aimed at alleviating overtourism.

Although brand–customer interaction is an established field of knowledge in marketing and consumer behaviour, it remains largely under-researched in the context of smart cities and smart tourism destinations (Molinillo et al., 2019). This theme is picked up by Gretzel and Collier de Mendonça ("Smart destination brands: Semiotic analysis of visual and textual signs") in their semiotic analysis of how two smart tourism sites (destinosinteligentes.es and smarttourismcapital.eu) conceptualise "smartness" to communicate their brand meaningfully to a wide array of stakeholders, even if the approach of these two sites remains somewhat techtopian. In a similar vein though focussing specifically on visitors, Chan et al.’s quantitative study ("Investigating visitors’ perception of smart city dimensions for city branding in Hong Kong") reveals that visitors’ two key determinants of a successful smart city brand are the quality of smart resident communities and energy management. It remains to be established; however, to what extent tourists from other parts of the world less represented in this study (e.g. Europe, North America and Australasia) would concur.

**Future-proofing smart tourism cities – could overtourism be the first test of many others ahead?**

As smart cities continue to evolve towards a more people-centred paradigm increasingly focussed on environmental sustainability (Yigitcanlar et al., 2019), their younger sibling concept of smart tourism cities/destinations appears to find itself strategically at a crossroads. One option would be to pursue the path of continuity by remaining in the shadow of smart cities (Jasrotia and Gangotia, 2018) and merely replicating their strategic positioning (Vargas-Sanchez et al., 2019). However, another strategic option for smart tourism cities is to position themselves differently and adopting an alternative paradigm. This could involve a re-think of their strategic positioning towards a more regional networked approach (Coca-Stefaniak and Seisdedos, forthcoming), which would help alleviate certain overtourism elements, or even a differentiation-based strategic realignment anchored in their idiosyncrasy or DNA (Coca-Stefaniak, 2013), which could help global tourism cities to deal with some of the globally homogenising factors affecting the progressive dwindling of the “authenticity” of their experiences (Knudsen and Waade, 2010; Alvarez, 2010; Martinez, 2016).

Regardless of what strategic positioning is adopted by the next generation of smart tourism cities, there is a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners that one of the defining characteristics of smart tourism destinations should be their ecosystem-centred approach (Gretzel et al., 2015; Boes et al., 2016) to the development and management of tourism as well as its wider challenges, including overtourism. This is also a common thread linking the articles included in this special issue of the IJTC. Similarly, the overtourism phenomena echo earlier research on the limits of acceptable change, used initially for the conservation of wilderness areas (Stankey et al., 1985) and applied later to tourism destinations (Ahn et al., 2002; Frauman and Banks, 2011). Innovation, as shown in many of the articles published in this special issue, also has a pivotal role in the context of smart tourism destinations. However, for smart innovation to succeed in the next generation of smart tourism cities, it will need to evolve from its rather peripheral role at present. In fact, it will need to become integral to the tourism city ecosystem by interacting actively with all its components, as shown conceptually in Figure 1.
This new conception of smart innovation, which may include in some instances elements of social innovation, will act as an enabler for destination management organisations in smart tourism cities to expand their remit and influence beyond managing and marketing “assets” and resources. Smart innovation initiatives will help tourism cities to build resilience to many of the short- and medium-term sustainable development challenges illustrated by the limits of acceptable change domain, whilst future-proofing tourism cities and their surrounding regions adopting an integrated network approach to longer-term issues, including climate change, among others.

As our understanding of the overtourism phenomena continues to develop and the often-uneasy relationship between local stakeholders and urban innovation initiatives such as smart cities and smart tourism destinations matures further (Kaika, 2017), we may still rediscover in the context of marketing and managing tourism cities what our ancestors already knew several centuries (or even millennia) ago. The hapless English poet Francis Thompson (1859–1907) captured this elegantly in a set of verses often adopted today to illustrate concepts such as chaos theory:

All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
that thou canst not stir a flower
without troubling of a star.

Francis Thompson (in: “The Mistress of Vision”)

References


About the Guest Editor

J. Andres Coca-Stefaniak is Associate Professor of Tourism and Events at the University of Greenwich (UK) and Deputy Leader of the university’s Tourism Research Centre (TRC). Andres is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Tourism Cities and formerly Head of Research, Thought Leadership and International Partnerships at the Association of Town and City Management. His research interests include urban tourism, place marketing and branding, smart tourism destinations, smart cities, the management and competitiveness of places (including high streets and town centres), and the management of sustainability in events and tourism destinations. Andres has an 18-year track record of managing large EU-funded projects with combined budgets to date in excess of €12m and serves on the editorial boards of various journals, including the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, Sustainability, Journal of Tourism Futures and the Journal of Place Management and Development, among others.
The phenomena of overtourism: a review

Rachel Dodds and Richard Butler

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the emergence of overtourism, outline the issues and contributing factors, as it relates to cities, and to suggest possible mitigation measures that might be taken by policy makers.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper draws from a review of literature looking at longitudinal issues of tourism development overtime and what has contributed to the phenomena of overtourism. A discussion of implications is provided from this review.

Findings – As tourism is an industry which has historically been poorly managed, greater political will and actual acknowledgement of the problem, as well as action by all levels of government are the necessary first steps to address overtourism.

Practical implications – This paper outlines key elements that contribute to overtourism and provides global examples which may help practitioners identify key critical issues in their own destinations and identify appropriate actions.

Social implications – This paper identifies issues raised by local resident populations and possible responses.

Originality/value – This paper provides a critical overview of overtourism issues, as it relates to cities and discusses potential mitigation and reduction efforts, thereby providing an explanation of why overtourism has become so prevalent.

Keywords Sustainability, Mitigation, Visitation, Cities, Overtourism

Paper type General review

Introduction

Overtourism is a new term for an old problem, namely, excessive numbers of tourists at a specific destination that can result in negative impacts of all types on the community involved. While the term is relatively recent, many of the problems involved have a long history, particularly in well-visited urban centres. The art critic, John Ruskin, complained of the presence and impacts of tourists in Venice in the mid-nineteenth century and the transformative effect of heavy visitation on destinations has been noted for well over a century (Butler, 2006). In more recent times, the oft-cited paper by Doxey (1975) is one of the first academic papers which specifically noted negative resident reaction to what were deemed excessive numbers of visitors in the vicinity of Niagara Falls. Other authors (Christaller, 1963; Krippendorf, 1987; Butler, 1980; Boissevain, 1996) have described the changes brought about in tourist destinations by increasing numbers of visitors. These changes have included negative reactions by residents, undesired physical change and damage to resources (natural and cultural) and general overcrowding. In many cases, these problems are exacerbated by the seasonal nature of much tourism, resulting and, as Milano et al. note, in:

[...] the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general well-being.

Thus, the phenomenon of overtourism has existed for a long time in specific tourist destinations. Many of these destinations are urban centres, as major cities offer a wide range of attractions and facilities, often including iconic and unique features such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok and Times Square in New York. The presence of such specific attractions often makes it difficult to persuade potential tourists to visit other locations and thus forego seeing what are world-famous sites and sights.
Origins and causes of overtourism

Overtourism has resulted from a combination of a number of factors, which together have created a “perfect storm” of visitors to specific sites. Although many forces have existed for years, many other influences have increased the issue to a tipping point and this phenomenon has spread to many more destinations apart from solely cities. As destinations have grown in visibility over time, they have always been seen as attractive to potential visitors and the tourism industry has responded by making it feasible for tourists to travel to such places. Negative reactions to tourists are long established. For example, tours organised by Thomas Cook in the nineteenth century were criticised for bringing tourists to Egypt and to other less remote places (Butler, 2006). In the modern era, there are a number of clearly identifiable factors that have combined to increase tourist numbers to current levels of over a billion travellers a year (UNWTO, 2018). In the first case, there is an ever-growing world population, which would inevitably give rise to an increased number of tourists, but this situation is exacerbated by the fact that a number of factors are making it easier for more people to become tourists than ever before. In a city context, the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC, 2018) claim that, of the 1.4bn overseas trips in 2018, 45 per cent (630m) were city breaks. Of the places where visitors are rising the fastest, over 80 per cent of them will be in the Middle East and Asia (Istanbul, Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Cairo, Jakarta, Mumbai, Bogota, Bangkok, Beijing, Shanghai and Moscow). Bangkok, as an example, became the most visited city in the world in 2018, attracting 22.5m visitors (Van et al., 2018). This growth is partially due to increased cheap air fares and Thailand being one of the first countries to receive Approved Destination Status for Chinese visitors.

Travel is also decreasing in relative, and in some cases, absolute cost, allowing more people to travel, both domestically and internationally, regardless of the environmental impact of travel and the implications for climate change. More tourists can now travel more widely, to a greater number of destinations and more frequently. Allied to this have been the technological advances, both in travel itself and in communications, allowing travel to be more easily arranged and undertaken with greater flexibility and freedom. This has allowed potential users to have a short-term focus in both arranging and undertaking travel, thus travelling at short notice to a wide range of destinations. In turn, new markets have emerged, of which the largest is that of China, but in many countries, the creation and expansion of the “middle class” has seen the emergence of new groups of people with the ability and potential to travel. This middle class is forecasted to increase by 160m over the next five years (Brookings Institute, 2017) and for China alone, the number of passport numbers is expected to double from 120m in 2017 to 240m by 2020 (Bloomberg, 2018 in Han and Cheer, 2018).

The great dissemination of information through social media (Instagram now has more than 1bn users) and the World Wide Web has allowed many people to become aware of, and informed about the many tourist attractions and how to reach them. This has increasing potential and fulfilled demand, often free of the limitations of having to use intermediaries such as travel agents and tourist boards. Low-cost airlines (Lawton, 2017) and more competition amongst modes of travel, including high-speed trains, have reduced travel time to destinations, making it possible for short-period trips to be made to an ever-increasing range of destinations, particularly urban centres. For example, according to Dodds and Butler (2019), low-cost carriers have driven growth though a 175 per cent increase in direct routes globally. Technological shifts are also prevalent in consumption of the tourist experience. These factors have created the potential for almost any major city to be the site for weekend visits, weddings and other related social events, some of which have little to do with traditional and conventional tourism but which see large numbers of travellers to specific attractions.

On the supply side, many destinations find themselves relatively powerless to stem such inflows of visitors, even if they wished to do so. Control over air travel often rests with air companies, national governments and privately owned airports. A similar situation exists for many seaports, where cruise shipping is controlled by the cruise companies and sea port owners. Even where some control over visitor numbers may be feasible, many cities are face the situation that attitudes towards visitor numbers are varied with many of the enterprises engaged in tourism concerned with promotion and achieving additional numbers of visitors. This is contrary to resident groups and others opposed to increased or even existing tourist numbers yet they may be relatively powerless and ineffective in opposing continued promotion of tourism or in introducing mitigation measures.
For example, Barcelona has faced many of these issues and has attempted some good mitigation attempts, yet arrivals are still increasing (Goodwin, 2019). Thus, in general, factors enabling the continued increase in tourist numbers to cities and elsewhere are far more powerful than forces wishing to limit or reduce visitation to affected communities.

In addition, a very significant set of factors relate to policy and planning approaches adopted by those agencies responsible for tourism development in destinations and at larger scales. The overwhelming support, even if sometimes understated, for continued growth by such agencies, has allowed the expansion of tourism and subsequent overdevelopment and excessive visitation of destinations, particularly cities (Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019; Vianello, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). The private sector has traditionally been in favour of continuous growth, and only in recent years have any significant numbers of operators adopted a more sustainable approach. It is, therefore, the absence of willingness to control and manage growth in tourism by the public sector, at all scales from municipal to national, which has allowed the generally unlimited expansion of tourism throughout the world. Weber et al. (2017, p. 199) note that “the way tourism is managed has a direct impact on carrying capacity and the resilience to overtourism”. That the current situation exists, despite global adoption of the principals of sustainable development and widespread political support for the concept of sustainable tourism, even by pro-growth bodies such as UNWTO (UNWTO, 2018), reveals how shallow the support for the concept is in practice and implementation. Therefore, overtourism has been allowed to occur in an increasing number of locations because of unwillingness by relevant authorities to accept the fact that there can be a situation in which tourist numbers are excessive and that there is a responsibility to correct such a situation. This was clearly outlined in a recent report which outlined that the “hidden” costs of housing, energy, water and waste from tourism are often eight to ten times higher than those from local consumption (Gössling and Peeters, 2015 in Epler Wood et al., 2019).

Overtourism as a recent phenomenon

While, as noted above, the problem of too many tourists in any specific location has been acknowledged for many decades, the problem has only attained widespread recognition in recent years. Understandably, to some decision makers perhaps, residents of tourist destinations, particularly cities, complaining about there being too many tourists in their community would seem to be illogical, when many such destinations have supported destination marketing organisations (DMOs) promoting their amenities in order to attract tourists for many years. DMOs and similar organisations, even if now being seen by some as outmoded (Dodds, 2010; Dredge, 2016), have long been charged with enticing ever-increasing numbers of tourists to destinations and generally have been encouraged to promote rather than manage tourism in their communities. To complain that they have been too successful may seem unfair, but also suggests, possibly incorrectly, that DMOs are responsible for excessive numbers, when, in fact, the considerable number of exogenous forces noted above has almost certainly exerted more influence over tourist numbers than those organisations. The relatively sudden appearance of large numbers of tourists in small and medium sized urban centres such as Munich, Germany (Namberger et al., 2019), Budapest (Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019) or Prague, Czech Republic (Miroslav, 2019) almost certainly owes more to the promotional efforts of low-cost airlines and compliant airport owners in those towns and cities than promotion by local agencies.

Allied to all of these factors is the influence of the World Wide Web and the various forms of social media (Gretzel, 2019) which have served to draw attention to specific locations, which in turn has led to an apparently insatiable desire amongst social media participants to visit and be seen in such places. Hong Kong’s Quarry Bay neighbourhood, for example, has been turned into a mass attraction and even warning signs against taking photos or disturbing residents has had little effect (Agence France-Presse, 2019). This growth has also been supported by the entertainment industry which has publicised the locations of films (Beeton, 2016) and television programmes, including music videos, locations to which large numbers of fans and media-conscious individuals also want to visit. Not all of such setting are in cities, places like the Isle of Skye in western Scotland, Maya Bay’s The Beach in Thailand (Hess, 2019) and locations in Northern Ireland used in the making of Game of Thrones, or used in the Harry Potter films also have seen rapid increases in numbers of visitors. Small urban centres such as Culross in Fife have been settings for the Outlander television
series, and Dubrovnik has seen its number of visitors increase beyond recognition after “starring” in Game of Thrones. Media influence, therefore, has been able to not only create massive publicity for locations with a resulting high awareness factor but also translate that visibility into visitation on a large scale, in some cases to places ill-prepared and undesiring to cater for such demand. This combination of traditional promotion efforts, at various levels from local to national and international, and the unpredictable, or at least unanticipated, impacts from media attention have allowed tourist numbers to increase rapidly and massively in specific locations with the resulting negative effects, now portrayed as overtourism.

Clearly, not all locations affected are unhappy with such a situation. In some cities, agencies, enterprise owners and some residents have been delighted to see large numbers of tourists, particularly so in those urban destinations which may have been facing a decline in numbers of traditional visitors. Such a situation is again not new. It has long been recognised that in any location, there will be winners and losers from tourism development and that some residents will be supportive of increased tourism and some opposed (Butler, 1975; Young, 1973). The traditional arguments over economic benefits vs social and environmental costs have long been debated in the tourism (and other) literature (Mathieson and Wall, 1982) and in most cases the economic arguments have won out. In reality, life is not as simple as the example of Doxey’s (1975) Irridex, and resident attitudes do not necessarily change consistently and uni-directionally with increasing tourist numbers (Brougham and Butler, 1981; Butler, 1975), but sudden large increases in tourist numbers are very likely to produce negative reactions, particularly if they result in perceived increased disturbance and loss of quality of life for residents.

All of the above does not necessarily explain the relatively sudden occurrence of overtourism and its popularity in many forms of media. It is a phenomenon particularly noted in urban centres: Venice, Barcelona, Rome, Dubrovnik and Prague are all places in which headlines have been recorded protesting at tourist numbers (Dodds and Butler, 2019). What such places have in common, with many other cities, is a relatively high proportion of educated and articulate residents many of whom are not involved or who do not benefit, at least directly, from tourism and are likely to be vocal in opposition to excessive numbers of visitors. To some, if not many of them, tourism and tourists are at best an economic necessity, and in some cases, a very real inconvenience and nuisance, competing for road and parking space, for service in shops and offices, for accommodation (for rent for holidays and purchase for second homes) and contributing litter, congestion and noise to the urban landscape. Such a situation in cities has been compounded by the growth of web-based accommodation platforms such as AirBnB, which it is argued, are not only in competition for residential units with local residents, but also allowing and tacitly encouraging illegal and unlicensed rental of accommodation, sometimes with anti-social results (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). Protests in cities such as Edinburgh, Palma and Paris have resulted in local government action or threat of action to control and limit such accommodation enterprises in response to such protests.

It is, perhaps, within a certain size range that these situations arise. There are far more tourists in London, New York or Mexico City than in any of those centres listed above, yet complaints of overtourism have not appeared widely to date in major metropolitan centres. This may be because in the very large cities, the majority of tourists are focussed in relatively small parts of these large metropolises, such as a small area of central London or Broadway in New York, and focus their activities on a limited number of sites (sights), long accepted as tourist magnets and where local residents from Her Majesty the Queen and Donald Trump simply avoid or ignore the sightseers. Many parts of these large cities are rarely visited by tourists, and if they do experience tourism, it is probably of a niche form, such as visitors interested in cultural or historic features or sites with very limited appeal. In smaller cities and towns, however, it is often much harder to escape and avoid both the physical presence of tourism or the developments associated with tourism such as hotels, eating, drinking and entertainment operations, and transportation links. Thus, residents of Prague (Miroslav, 2019) have to use the Charles V Bridge along with tourists and experience congestion and delays going about their daily business. In Edinburgh, a place of frustration for its residents is transport in the centres of the Old and New Towns even out of the tourist season. This situation is exacerbated in the summer by increased tourists, and during the Edinburgh Festival, parts of the city are next to impossible to access for normal traditional business. What may be small numbers of tourists compared to local populations, particularly in the major urban centres, the effects of these
incomers can be disproportionately large, particularly where such numbers of visitors have grown rapidly, often without corresponding improvement in capacity in services and facilities. Allied with different patterns of behaviour, different social mores, different temporal patterns of social interaction and sometimes unacceptable (to residents) expectations of permittable actions (Weber et al., 2019), it is easy to see how what might be viewed as xenophobic attitudes towards tourists can develop. The appearance of negative graffiti, such as “tourists go home”, or “why is it called tourist season if we are not allowed to shoot them?” indicates increasing dissatisfaction with the apparent mismanagement or non-management of tourists in a growing number of cities. The rise of overtourism sentiment and expression can be seen as a call for action or reaction to the disturbance felt by residents in cities in particular, but despite some years of action in some cities, of which Barcelona is a good example (Goodwin, 2019), the problem still remains and is even increasing.

Mitigation, reduction and prevention

In the future, unless there are radical changes in many of those factors listed above as being responsible for the appearance and growth of overtourism, the situation will become even more problematical. In reality, it is likely that many of these factors will grow in scale and influence rather than diminish unless appropriate actions are taken. The UNWTO (2019) figures show that overall tourism arrivals increased in 2018 compared to 2017, and despite climate change protests in several countries, little action has been taken to curtail travel, particularly flying, and social media continue to exert pressure to visit “bucket list” destinations. A recent coverage of crowds of people waiting to reach the summit of Mount Everest (Brown, 2019) demonstrates that overtourism is not confined to urban centres but is now found throughout the world, and thus calls to limit tourist numbers are becoming ever more common (Koens et al., 2018; Oklevik et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019). To achieve a reduction in numbers of visitors and still maintain a desirable level of tourism is a complex problem and has rarely been managed. Indeed, Hall (2019, p. 13) rightly pointed out how problematic the notion that tourism can be sustainable solely by exerting greater effort and demanding greater efficiency. To curtail tourist numbers is relatively simple. For example, limiting means of access, e.g. flights, would be likely to be successful, but, in reality, is problematic because of other factors involved. Air travel between countries is subject to international agreements and treaties and arbitrarily reducing services by an urban government such as a city council is unlikely to be legal or acceptable to higher levels of government, or effective. Many airports are privately owned and managed and the governments of these cities cannot reduce the frequency of flights without a national level action at the very least. Similarly, ports are often self-governing and privately owned, so difficulties would be encountered with attempts to limit cruise ship dockings, although such visits are not normally subject to international or national agreements. Some authorities (e.g. Orkney Island Council, Dubrovnik, Amsterdam) have imposed limits on numbers of ships and/or numbers of passengers landed over a period of time, or maximum numbers of ships allowed to dock at any one time. In theory, island cities are better placed to impose such limits, although it has taken Venice many years to exert some level of control over the routing of cruise ships around the city and forcing docking to the periphery of the island. This has not had much noticeable improvement, as illustrated by the collision of a cruise liner with a smaller tourist vessel moored in Venice in May 2019. Cities which receive large numbers of tourists by land are much more vulnerable to unlimited numbers, unless there is a complete ban on non-local vehicles from entering all or part of a city. Some small towns have managed to impose such limits; Medina on Malta is one example and several towns in the Alps are all or partly car-free (Verbeeck et al., 2011), while others, such as Lucerne (Weber et al., 2019), are becoming crowded with coaches in the central part of the city. Thus, limits or constraints on numbers accessing cities and other destinations are difficult to effectively impose and manage unless all forms of transportation fall under the control of the respective city authorities. Refusing to approve expansion of capacity of airports and ports, of railways and of roads and parking is more practical but would also have potential negative effects on the operation of the city in other respects and on travel by residents of those communities.

Herein lies a major problem for all cities, namely, that the facilities and services used by tourists are often the same services and facilities needed by local residents and businesses, and support for restricting or reducing their capacity is likely to be met with equally strong opposition from elements in the city with different viewpoints. It is next to impossible to separate locals from
visitors in terms of their use of such infrastructure. Although discriminatory pricing, through different rates for locals by means of identity and loyalty cards for example, is feasible, it is not always without opposition and can elicit negative reactions from the tourism industry and from tourists themselves. In the cases of isolated regions or small islands, priority can be given to local residents needing access for maintenance of everyday activities such as education, business and medical matters, but such a situation is much less manageable in a large city with great numbers of people and multiple linkages and journeys involved. Therefore, if cities are unable to control the means of access by visitors, then the only mitigation measures are either those related to controlling and managing tourists who do arrive, or deterring tourists from wanting to visit in the first place. The latter point is controversial because of the possibility of reducing tourist numbers below an economic and desired level (even assuming such a level could be identified and agreed to), as tourists would begin to feel unwelcome in specific locations and perhaps desert those locations en masse. Most destinations worry more about permanently damaging their reputation and losing tourists than suffering from too much success (which has traditionally been measured in terms of increasing numbers of visitors). DMOs, found in most urban tourist destinations, are normally seen and function as promotion agencies rather than management ones as noted above, and their focus has traditionally been on attracting not deterring visitors, and this is unlikely to change without very strong guidance and control from city authorities.

Amsterdam has recently announced that “demotion” of tourism is to become part of city policy; the intent is not to make Amsterdam unattractive to tourists but not to promote it to attract greater numbers. Success will depend heavily upon support from other agencies involved with tourism and this is far from guaranteed. Individual accommodation enterprises, ranging from international hotel chains to individual AirBnB operators, are unlikely to cease advertising, and thus promoting, Amsterdam. Enforcing appropriate and often existing controls over licensed and unlicensed accommodation providers is receiving much greater attention, as witnessed by actions in Palma (Mallorca), Edinburgh, Barcelona and Venice. Demotion is, theoretically, a much more desirable action as it does not deter those potential tourists with a real interest in visiting a specific city but does deter the opportunistic or purely casual visitor attracted by promotional information only. It has the advantage of not appearing anti-tourist and also of being an appropriate response to citizen protests about tourist numbers. Such actions will not curtail tourist numbers alone however, as media attention and surrogate promotion through videos, blogs and appearance in entertainment outlets (Beeton, 2005), such as film, television and books, for example, will always draw attention of potential visitors to specific locations. Large cities are also newsworthy because of non-tourist events, such as political actions, celebrity visitation, and settings for meetings and conferences, and thus will be highly visible for many reasons.

In all cases, it is the existence of differing views about tourism, its significance, importance and value to a city, and the degree to which disbenefits outweigh benefits which cause the major difficulty in resolving overtourism issues. Those residents not involved in tourism, that is, not employed in or engaged commercially in tourism, often see or receive little direct benefit from tourism and the presence of tourists. They do often experience the congestion, inconvenience, disturbance and changes brought about by increasing numbers of tourists and greater tourism-related developments. To them, a reduction in tourist numbers, if not a total absence of tourists, would appear to be the only way to restore the quality and way of life before large-scale tourism was developed. On the flipside, the presence of a viable and large-scale tourism industry provides not only employment and income in many ways (e.g. direct expenditure, wages, taxes), but also pressure often resulting in enlarged and improved services and facilities, including transport infrastructure and new commercial ventures. Such contradictions have been a part of tourism from earliest times and as a general rule, the economic arguments have won out over social and environmental concerns, as has been the case throughout all forms of economic development.

Specific suggestions for dealing with overtourism have mostly been related to easing the problem in specific cities or specific sites within cities, rather than tackling directly the problem of too many people and too many tourists. Therefore, persuading tourists to visit at less crowded times and to visit less crowded sites or cities have been the most common suggestions. These proposed actions are essentially worthless in the long term or at the global or even national scale. Other efforts at tackling seasonality suggest that having people come at less crowded times does not
reduce numbers at the peak periods but, in fact, increases overall demand and visitation (Butler, 2001). Suggesting, for example, that visitors to Paris do not go to see the Eiffel Tower, in Rome they should avoid the Trevi Fountain, or in London visitors should ignore Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, or that elsewhere, e.g. Sydney (Opera House), Pisa (Leaning Tower), Cairo (Pyramids), the iconic sites and attractions (Weidenfeld et al., 2015) should not be visited is unrealistic as such attractions are too well known to be forgotten or ignored.

In the media attention given recently to overtourism and related protests, it must be remembered and admitted that not all residents of popular cities are anti-tourism. To support its viewpoint of continued tourism expansion, UNWTO (2019) recently released the results of a survey of some 12,000 respondents from 15 countries showing that “local residents remain largely positive to Urban Tourism”. Such a result is not surprising for the reasons noted above, nor too is the finding that those who are international tourists themselves have a higher perception of the positive impact of tourism than those who do not travel regularly. Potential measures to address growing tourism flows in cities were cited by respondents as “improving infrastructures and facilities” and “creating experiences and attractions that benefit residents as well as visitors”. Worthwhile as such actions may be, they would do little or nothing to solve the problems caused by what are generally accepted as excessive visitor numbers, at least in specific parts of many cities, and serve mainly to justify the continued growth of urban tourism.

Conclusion

Overtourism is complex (Koens et al., 2018). One has to conclude that as long as there is a lack of agreement over the nature of the problem (widely seen as too many tourists) and also disagreement over determining suitable and acceptable levels of visitation, the situation will not improve. At national and often regional levels and even at the municipal level, there is still massive promotion of countries, regions and cities, while economic growth globally allows the potential number of tourists to increase, and technological progress allows more people to travel widely. Barring economic recessions and depressions, economic growth is not likely to stop, tourist markets will continue to grow and technology is likely to continue to make travel easier and cheaper. Actions to reduce climate change may eventually reduce the overall level of flying and travel in general but that would primarily affect international travel in most places, whereas domestic tourism is several times larger than international tourism, so much of the problem of numbers would remain. Reducing or not increasing numbers is key to mitigating overtourism. Un-promotion or de-promotion is the least harmful (in economic terms) of the possible actions to reduce overtourism and its negative impacts as it removes some of the vicarious and somewhat aimless visitation to some locations but does not tell tourists they are unwelcome. Such action needs to be supported by increased management (Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019; Du Cros and McKercher, 2015; Colomb and Novy, 2017; Sommer and Helbrecht, 2017), especially of tourists within cities pre-booking for most or all major attractions and accommodation should be required, which would allow maximum numbers to be set and timing of visitation adjusted to avoid congestion. Such arrangements already exist in cities for major events such as sport competitions, where tickets may be tied to pre-booked packages, and could be linked to visas and travel permits where these already exist. The idea that unlimited and unrestricted travel should be a right and thus available to all who can pay is neither longer acceptable nor compatible with environmental problems, changing attitudes to energy use, increasing concerns over quality of life and the preservation of cultural heritage. Widespread and uncontrolled conversion of residential properties to short-term holiday lets is becoming increasingly undesirable and unwanted, placing appropriate and fair restrictions on such developments is not anti-tourist but pro-resident, and accepts and protects the need for residents of cities to have some security and economic protection for their right to live and work in their own cities. Without such measures, far more anti-tourism and anti-tourist protests, signs and actions are likely to become the norm. As Doyen (1975) noted decades ago, “the natives are getting restless”. It behoves those involved in tourism, in economic development, in transportation, and in government at all levels to admit the existence of the problem of overtourism and to take actions to deal with the problem without permanently damaging tourism, or in the words of the old fable, not destroying “the goose that lays the golden egg”. For the issues of overtourism to be mitigated, greater political will and actual acknowledgement of the problem are the necessary first steps.
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Further reading


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Creativity, innovation and smartness in destination branding

Lino Trinchini, Natalia Andreevna Kolodii, Natalia Aleksandrovna Goncharova and Rodolfo Baggio

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of creativity and innovation as important attributes of smartness in cities/destination branding.

Design/methodology/approach – A conceptual support to the notion of smart destination branding is provided by discussing the relationship between creativity, innovation and technology as determinants for the smartness concept applied to destination branding and marketing. This paper adopts a qualitative and logical-deductive approach. The cases of Milan (Italy) and Tomsk (Russia) are presented and compared as smart cities approach to branding within and outside Europe. The authors emphasise the importance of smart destination branding strategies based on people participation, creativity and innovation as drivers of smart urban development.

Findings – The endogenous ability of cities/destinations to embrace creativity across stakeholders is essential to smart branding strategies relying on advanced information and communication technologies. The entwined connection between smart cities/destinations creative initiatives and innovation underpins innovative branding strategies.

Research limitations/implications – The paper is conceptual and the findings cannot be generalised to other destinations, even if a couple of examples are briefly discussed. The authors intend to provide a basis for future research concerning smart destination branding.

Originality/value – The technological, human and institutional dimensions of smart cities and smart tourism destinations have been increasingly addressed by scholars and practitioners. Despite the reference and attention to human factors is not new, there is still a lack of extensive focus on creativity as crucial driver of innovation in smart destination branding. This paper aims to fill such gap by focussing on the implications of urban smartness driven by creativity and innovation in destination branding and marketing.

Keywords Innovation, Creativity, Branding, Smart destinations, Human smart cities, Urban smartness, Tomsk, Milan

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction
Creativity and innovation have been widely recognised as essential to cities attractiveness and competitiveness. Cities are increasingly relying on their capability to attract visitors and investors as well as talented and creative people, while fostering innovation for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. To gain competitive advantage, such value of creativity and innovation for cities is usually translated into promotional marketing strategies by exploiting the so-called human and social capital resources. Marketers tend to brand or re-brand cities as creative, intelligent and innovative cities (Hospers, 2008), according to their peculiar attributes. With the emergence of smart destinations, this also holds true for those cities branding themselves as “smart” to convey an attractive, innovative and sustainable image. The “smart” brand, therefore, will be likely “added to the brand soup of contemporary cities” (Yigitcanlar, 2018 p. 3), before experiencing the potential value of smart cities. Despite its popularity, in practice, the “smart” concept should be still deemed as “very fuzzy and often used to drive specific political agenda and to sell technological solutions” (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015, p. 180).

The human-centred smart city (HSC) concept has emerged alongside the common technology-led discourse over smart urban development (Concilio and Rizzo, 2016), in order to stress the growing...
attention to the human and social dimensions (Caragliu et al., 2011; Boes et al., 2015). Urban smartness has similarly evolve towards a more comprehensive, balanced and humanised notion (Lara et al., 2016). In the light of smart urban ecosystems complexity, creativity can also play a crucial role in driving the socio-economic development of smart destinations (Baggio and Moretti, 2018), particularly for its ability to trigger innovation (Baggio, 2014).

Adopting a conceptual approach, this paper aims to discuss creativity as determinant of innovation in smart destinations branding strategies and how the intertwined relationship between creativity and innovation may enrich and enhance the notion of smartness applied to cities. After introducing the context and complexity of smart urban ecosystems, the human and social attributes of cities will be explored with attention to endogenous creativity enabling innovative practices to create the destinations image and branding. The case of Milan and Tomsk branding strategies will be presented according to their respective approach to smartness. The final remarks concern the connection between creativity, innovations and urban smartness in terms of socio-economic development, inclusiveness, including indications for future research needs.

The context: smart cities, smart destinations, smart places

In the last decades, the “smart” term association to urban contexts has become very common among scholars, city managers and practitioners. The “smart” transformation of cities and tourist destinations can be distinct and still highly interrelated. Whereas smart cities focus on local residents and business (Caragliu et al., 2011), smart destinations are special cases of smart cities concerning local stakeholders as well as tourists (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015). Smart destinations clearly adopt a smart city approach based on an expanded notion of smartness encompassing technology, people and institutions (Nam and Pardo, 2011). In a Hegelian attempt at preserving, changing and advancing (Aufhebung) the view of urban smartness, technology is no longer the prominent feature. Most recent conceptualisations of smart cities, in fact, have moved towards a socio-technical (Kopackova and Libalova, 2017), sustainable (Romanelli et al., 2019) and multidimensional perspective (Yigitcanlar et al., 2018), without discarding the significant role of technology. Smart technologies impose structural changes across social, physical, economic and governance of cities. The integration of advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) into infrastructure is blurring digital–physical boundaries through ubiquitous computing and augmented reality. Such virtual-real environment entails people and communities, empowered in terms of easier access to real-time information, collaborative interactions and participation. A higher level of synchronisation and interconnectivity between things, people and organisations enables value co-creation and dynamic stakeholders’ engagement, with implications for entrepreneurship, innovation, competitiveness and participatory governance. So, being a smart city goes beyond the mere use, combination or integration of advanced ICTs or reengineering the large amount of data thereof. This is evident in the early definition of smart destinations as a tourism systems encompassing the human and social dimensions (Buhalls and Amaranggana, 2014), alongside subsequent diverse connotations discussed in literature. Boes et al. (2015) distinguish between hard smartness (infrastructure) and soft smartness (human capital, social capital, innovation and leadership) by stressing their combination to gain competitiveness. Del Chiappa and Baggio (2015) address knowledge sharing and learning processes as key to smart destinations developments. Likewise, Buonincontri and Micera (2016) recognise the importance of the co-creation of tourism experiences in smart destinations, as the outcome of interactions with tourists, active participation and sharing between tourists. Further, Romão et al. (2018) highlight the tension between tourists and residents’ social determinants of sustainability in smart urban attractiveness.

Cities are clearly the practical context for the application and understanding of smartness, considering the concentration of knowledgeable and creative people, infrastructure, services and the high density of businesses and tourists. This view is consistent with the widespread use of urban places as “living laboratories” or testbeds for smart initiatives to address socio-demographic, economic and technological challenges as well as to create a positive destination perception. The global competition among destinations is enforcing cities to look smart, and to be recognised as such, to attract tourists, knowledgeable people and investments. At the same time, smartness has been increasingly regarded as the solution to the major issues presented by rapid urbanisation and “overtourism”. Problems
concerning mobility, overcrowding and effective allocation of local resources, to name a few, could depend on the successful development of smart destinations, in line with implementation of smart urbanism (Azzari et al., 2018). Cities, and specifically tourist destinations, need to be capable of taking advantage of smart technology. Big Data and knowledge sharing to foster innovation and sustainability in both services and society. But they are also exposed to the hype surrounding the smart concept. Scholars widely agree upon the importance of a holistic and networked view of smart destinations (Nam and Pardo, 2011; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014), with emphasis on phenomena and perspectives that are not new. The early view of the city as a network of networks connecting individuals, communities and organisations (Craven and Wellman, 1973) has gradually evolved towards the view of the networked city and society transformed by pre-internet computer-aided communication technology (Turolf and Hiltz, 1978; Dupuy and Tan, 1988). As digital interactive ICTs developed, from internet/web to wireless and social media, networked cities and technology dialectic coevolved in the light of the profound transformations of urban structures and processes (Castells, 1994; Graham and Auriag, 1997; Monstadt, 2009; Cassandras, 2016). The power of flows articulated in the form of travel hubs and nodes is shaping destinations as loci and foci of technology-mediated experiences within a shared space. In this respect, it is not possible to ignore the socio-physical dimensions of smart destinations as well as the limitations brought by the immoderate technology dependence. Considering the scale and diversity of urban transformations over time, the challenges of understanding and defining smart destinations can be seen in the light of the inherent complexity of urban ecosystems.

The complexity of urban ecosystems

Being open to many different interpretations, the smart city concept epitomises the difficulties in finding an agreed definition of contemporary urban ecosystems. Indeed, complex systems are elusive and resistant to any exhaustive definition. If a system is commonly defined by the structured interactions of its components keeping the functions stable around an equilibrium (Waldrop, 1992), complexity denotes high-level phenomena emerging from configurations, processes, interactions and patterns far from stable and predictable behaviours (Batty, 2005). Thus, complex adaptive systems (CAS) are defined by non-linear processes and interactions as well as non-proportional relationships between effects and causes. Any sort of ecosystem, including cities, has also been recognised as a typical example of CAS. Provided that an ecosystem entails the aggregation of living organism dynamically interacting with their physical habitat within specific boundaries (Tansley, 1935; Likens, 1992; Chapin et al., 2002), cities can be seen as ecosystems because of those networked interactions among their biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) components, such as roads, building and other geophysical elements (e.g. Newman and Jennings, 2012).

The socio-economic and technical transformations embraced by smart cities cannot be understood or acted upon without adopting a holistic approach. With advanced ICTs as common attribute (Harrison and Donnelly, 2011), the most recent views of cities as smart urban ecosystems take in the attributes of CAS (Batty, 2005). In destinations permeated by intense and dynamic interactions among local authorities, residents, tourists and firms (Jovicic, 2019), stakeholders tend to respond to internal and external stimuli in unpredictable and non-linear ways (Sainaghi and Baggio, 2017). Aside from such characteristics of CAS, smart destinations augment the complexity of smart urban systems experiencing additional flows of resources and people generated by the influx of tourists. In line with the constant attention to tourist destinations as complex systems (McKercher, 1999; Russell, 2005; Hartman, 2016), the view of smart destinations as ecosystems has been commonly accepted by tourism scholars (Boes et al., 2016). Accordingly, the growing attention to the human dimensions of smart cities/destinations is consistent with the disruption of abiotic/non-abiotic networked interactions placed by smart technologies.

The people-centred smart city

The integrated ecosystem view of smart cities cannot ignore the human and social components in relation to the physical and digital infrastructure. To counterbalance the technological determinism of smart city, people-oriented approaches have recently gained attention among scholars focussing on the importance of participation, needs and quality of life of citizens.
The participatory approach identifies citizens interaction and engagement with local government bodies as driver of sustainable development, urban planning and effective governance (Castelnovo et al., 2016; Lara et al., 2016). Through an effective collaboration with local authorities, citizens can participate in co-designing or co-creating services and solutions meeting common needs and interests. So, residents taking part in public decision-making can actually influence practices and policies ranging from municipal budget to environmental or community-led projects in their neighbourhood. For this reason, the involvement of citizens has been deemed as essential to sustainable city management and development thanks to a broader participation encompassing all stakeholders, the exchange of information, and a fairer distribution of political power, resources and decentralised decision-making processes (Fischer, 2012).

Concerning active citizens’ participation, the complex relationship between government and society has evolved alongside societal, economic and technical changes over time. Putting aside that Rousseau and Mill’s thinking of citizen participation in public decision-making was purely theoretical, as well as the emphasis on “formal and electoral participation and competition” by Dahl and Schumpeter (McNulty and Wampler, 2015, p. 3), the contemporary direct citizen intervention in policymaking and public services design for the common good at any level of government presents limitations and challenges affecting governance. Individual and collective participation, for instance, can be diluted or ineffective in large and complex administrative cities within which diverse group of people and communities coexist and bring forward different needs and wants (Roberts, 2004). Even if such limitations of scale can be overcome by ICTs facilitating interactions and direct involvement of all, including minorities, the new forms of digital communication require access to technology and skills that are not equally distributed across stakeholders. Also, the divide affecting citizen involvement extends beyond the use of ICTs and includes time, learning and knowledge needed to decide and deliberate over complex urban issues, such as municipal budgeting, waste management or public health. Addressing and removing these challenges and barriers is vital to implementing participatory governance, which is one of the most salient concepts underpinning smart city development (Azzari et al., 2018). Given the complexity of governing shared decision-making processes across all stakeholders, it is fair to say that there is no silver bullet for effectively managing citizens’ direct involvement and appropriate response to their wants and needs. As powerful enabler of collaborative and citizen-centric forms of governance, in fact, advanced ICTs can also bear risks when their long-term effects and hidden costs are not taken into account. Castelnovo et al. (2016, p. 736) advocate the need of focussing on “the city’s capability to generate and manage public value” as well as adopting “the appropriate instruments for checking whether we are going into right direction” to avoid technological lock-in. In contrast to e-governance, based on the use of ICTs by local government to improve citizen centricity, service and administrative efficiency, smart governance should be implemented through a holistic approach to people participation in decision-making resulting from complex negotiations and collaborations (Azzari et al., 2018).

Linking creativity and innovation

To be smart, cities need to nurture people “smartness”. The “smart” aspect of people has been clearly discussed by scholars as an intrinsic and crucial component of smart cities. Within the society domain of the Smart City Wheel model developed by Cohen (Smart Circle, 2013), the smart people characteristic encompasses attributes ranging from education to continuous learning. A mere reference to the level of qualification or learning skills of citizens cannot describe the articulated notion of smart people. Factors like creativity, flexibility, ethnic plurality, open-mindedness or cosmopolitanism (Shapiro, 2006; Caragliu et al., 2011; Albino et al., 2015), talent and tolerance (Florida, 2003) and citizen participation (Romanelli et al., 2019) have also been identified as essential indicators of smart people in combination with smart living, smart governance, smart mobility, smart environment and smart economy dimensions. The response to people’s needs and public value creation through innovative solutions cannot ignore the “smart combination of endowments and activities of self-decisive, independent and aware citizens” (Griffinger et al., 2007, p. 11). Smart people factors are commonly aggregated under the human capital concept to denote changes in persons’ knowledge and capabilities “making them able to act in new ways” (Coleman, 1988, p. 100). Likewise, social inclusion and public life participation
attributes are termed as social capital (Albino et al., 2015), with reference to the relational capital emerging from urban communities, abilities to maintain the social “network of more or less institutionalized relationships” through intrinsic reciprocity and trustworthiness norms (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249; Putnam, 1995; Caragliu et al., 2011). The amalgam of the human and social capital, as said, is essential to smart cities sustainable urban development. Caragliu and Del Bo (2019), for instance, identify the interplay of local knowledge production functions and innovation processes in smart cities policies, while Dameri and Ricciardi (2015) assess the adoption of intellectual capital (IC) for smart cities innovation systems management. Bearing in mind that IC can influence radical and incremental systemic innovations, human capital has positive implications upon social capital and vice versa. Smart cities are, therefore, the context in which residents and tourists can be generators of creative and innovative ideas, solutions and services, rather than passive users (Haque, 2012) thanks to the availability of physical and digital infrastructures allowing the connection of people as well as the intense exchange of information and knowledge (Del Chiappa and Baggio, 2015). The adoption of the creative city paradigm in smart cities, with a prominent focus on the attraction of highly skilled and creative people, might present limitations that affect innovation process and outcomes. The strong reliance on human capital, in the form of an external or distinct class of creative people (Florida, 2003; Richards, 2014), can arguably be problematic in terms of increasing the tension between local communities and tourists, with negative outcomes for residents and the image of destinations (Séraphin et al., 2019). The best configuration of a creative and innovative system, ideally, requires an appropriate combination of strong and weak ties across networked communities, which can benefit from an efficient exchange of non-redundant peripheral information and ideas (Granovetter, 1973; Baggio, 2014). Following this line of thoughts, it is clear that creativity, as powerful enabler of innovation, plays a fundamental role in the definition of urban smartness.

Creativity as attribute of urban smartness

Urban smartness can take great advantage of creativity in triggering diverse forms of innovation for the benefit of all stakeholders. The ability of individuals and communities to combine and recombine ideas in new and unexpected ways contributes to the social construction of smartness in cities and destinations. This assumption is coherent with the HSC view based on participatory governance, smart people and social innovation (Concilio and Rizzo, 2016), along with the importance of human and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Boes et al., 2015). Rather than a “soft” component of urban smartness, creativity is considered here as the socially constructed “thick” attribute of urban ecosystems connoting smart destinations identity and socio-economic development.

To contextualise the role of creativity in urban smartness, and reduce the ambiguity of both concepts, it is essential to acknowledge that the generation, elaboration, promotion and implementation of novel ideas is closely related to the human, social, technological and structural factors of smart destinations. As CAS, smart destinations embody uncertainty and asymmetries at different levels. While uncertainty is intrinsically linked to the unpredictable self-organising nature of smart ecosystems (Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamfsu, 2015), structural asymmetries can be found across the socio-physical and economic urban layers influenced by market-driven technological innovations (Anttiroiko, 2014). Rather than limiting smart destinations variability to facilitate predictability, creative capabilities are essential to deal with the inherent uncertainty of smart urban ecosystems. It is clear that the pervasiveness of smart technology has raised the level of complexity of urban life (Yigitcanlar et al., 2018), by increasing the physical–digital gaps and bridges and blurring roles of stakeholders across diverse overlapping systems (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015). The additional complexity and uncertainty of smart destinations lies in the tourism–“non tourism” entwined systemic relationship. Provided that complexity is the main source of uncertainty, the self-adjusting non-linear dynamic processes within smart destination ecosystems tend to reduce spontaneously the level of uncertainty until it raises again, in cyclical ways, through unpredictable and emergent innovations. Similarly, creativity can arise from indirect mechanisms of collaborative interactions among agents of a smart ecosystem (individuals, ideas, communities) producing synergistic effects (Corning, 2002). It is, therefore, possible to engage with such emergent processes through collective creative capabilities for the endogenous and sustainable generation of innovative outcomes. Hence, the reference to serendipitous discovery as an integral
component of human creativity driving innovation and making destinations smarter (Baggio and Moretti, 2018; McKenna, 2018). In essence, the peculiarity of collective creativity dwells in the potential capability of people to make destinations smarter through emergent innovation and sustainable approaches to uncertainties and asymmetries as attributes of the urban smartness composite concept (Table I).

Creativity and innovation in smart destinations

Cities are bearer of emergent innovations and creativity. Depending on the urban design and planning adopted, different approaches to creativity can lead to equally diverse innovative outcomes, with impact on branding strategies. The examples of Milan and Tomsk will be hereafter discussed with attention to people-centred smart urban innovation and creative practices in relation to respective branding strategies. The cities were purposely selected to address their different approach to smart urban development and destination branding.

Milan

Smart destination profile

Milan is one of the most famous cities in Italy and internationally renowned destination leveraging on its high-profile reputation in business, education, fashion and design to attract tourists, scholars and investors. The city of Milan and its Municipality represent the core of a large metropolitan area in which several administrative units are conurbed with the main urban centre. Despite being the Italian

Table I  Theoretical underpinnings of people-centred urban smartness

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical arguments (concepts)</th>
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<td>Smart cities/destinations as complex adaptive systems (CAS)</td>
<td>Smart cities/destinations are typical example of self-organising ecosystems and CAS characterised by non-linear processes and networked interactions, asymmetries and uncertainties</td>
<td>Batty (2005), Newman and Jennings (2012), Hartman (2016), Sainaghi and Baggio (2017)</td>
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<td>Human Smart Cities (HSC) focussing on people-driven smartness</td>
<td>HSC concept focusses on people as the “true” actors of urban smartness, rather than technology. Citizen participation and interactions with government are key to HSC development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participatory governance (smart governance)</td>
<td>Effective collaboration with local authorities, citizens can participate in co-designing or co-creating services and solutions to meet common needs and interests</td>
<td>Hospers (2008), Fischer (2012), Castelnovo et al. (2016), Azzari et al. (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative interactions</td>
<td>People engagement and interactions for collaborative purposes can facilitate the flow of ideas and active participation in smart urban developments</td>
<td>Corning (2002), Paulus and Nijstad (2003), Cohen et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and learning</td>
<td>The sharing of knowledge and learning processes foster creativity and innovations, as well as human and social capital</td>
<td>Nam and Pardo (2011), Del Chiappa and Baggio (2015), Caraglui and Del Bo (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human and social capital</td>
<td>Human capital has positive implications upon social capital and vice versa. The combination of human and social capital is essential to smart cities sustainable urban development</td>
<td>Coleman (1988), Shapiro (2006), Albino et al. (2015), Boes et al. (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People-oriented innovation (social innovation)</td>
<td>Residents and tourists as active generator of novel and creative ideas for better urban living</td>
<td>Griffinger et al. (2007), Gascó et al. (2016), Romanelli et al. (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent innovations</td>
<td>The spontaneous and self-organising transformations (emergent processes) of smart urban ecosystems produce endogenous innovative outcomes</td>
<td>Batty (2005), Fleming and Marx (2006), Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus (2015), McKenna (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serendipity</td>
<td>As accidental discovery and random encountering, serendipity can foster knowledge, creativity, innovation andsmartness</td>
<td>McKenna (2018), Baggio and Moretti (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: The authors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
smartest city (Forum Pa, 2018), the Municipality of Milan has only recently driven its efforts towards the development of a strategy centred on its citizens and an open innovation approach (Gascó et al., 2016). Since 2012, the Smart City strategy is promoted by the Municipality of Milan and its Chamber of Commerce, which deployed a plan based on coordination, with the involvement of internal (within Municipality) and external (local stakeholders, including citizens). In contrast to technology-led approaches in other European cities, Milan has adopted a “model of participatory governance based on [the] facilitation of co-creation and shared decision processes”, with proposals provided by many citizens who attended several working groups (Bonduel, 2018). Milan participated in EU funded projects (Horizon 2020 programme), with a specific focus on solutions reducing social and geographical gaps, improving energy efficiency and enhancing transportation services. Such emphasis on the human/social dimension is consistent with the participation in European projects (2010–2012) aimed at strengthening social ties and interactions (MyNeighbourhood) as well as urban planning and design through inclusive participatory governance and co-creation (Periphèria). Yet, the smart interventions realised “are at an embryonic stage of the path towards smartness” and their effect “on tourism represents a derivation rather than a primary purpose” (Della Corte et al., 2017, p. 16).

Destination branding approach

The perception of Milan as destination is mainly associated with the prominent image of an international city of design, business, and high fashion and shopping. Such view has been supported and branded through the Fashion Week, the annual furniture exhibition, trade-fairs and other international major events, such as the World Expo in 2015, which attempted to broaden the traditional image of Milan by focussing on sustainable development and food. Despite some attempts to link events and business-related projects into the smart city strategy (Gascó et al., 2016), Milan is still far from embracing appropriate participatory governance and translate its potential into branding strategies by including overlooked existing attributes. The potential to diversify the image of the city is very high, but underestimated in terms of promotional opportunities. A large amount of Milan’s artistic heritage and cultural resources have not been fully publicised, or mentioned at all, by entitled public institutions, such as the city council, the Province of Milan and the Lombardy Region (De Carlo et al., 2009). This is actually reflected in the gap between the stereotypical and experiential perceptions of Milan as a place to visit and live, with a positive distinction in favour of actual visitors against potential ones. In addition to cultural resources, the city has also a strong educational reputation built upon high quality universities, which are “able to support business innovation, foster entrepreneurship and attract talented people” (De Noni et al., 2014, p. 224). Creativity is an equally important and often neglected attribute in the city branding. Apart from fashion and design mainstream initiatives, as for the “Fuorisalone” socio-cultural events across the whole city during the annual furniture exhibition fair, Milan’s has long been experiencing grassroots creativity ranging from the reconversion of peripheral dismissed industrial facilities into creative public places for citizens to the informal creation of coworking spaces and community gardening. Since the City of Literature designation within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2017, Milan has integrated its historical and rich literary heritage into the Smart City Strategy (https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/milan). The combination of the tangible and intangible attributes of the city with core values (innovation, creativity and knowledge) is key to brand Milan as smart destination.

Tomsk

Urban profile

As capital of the eponymous region, Tomsk is one of the oldest Siberian towns. With high-ranking universities, research hubs and historical heritage, the city is a distinguished scientific and cultural centre on the Trans-Siberian Railway route. A Special Economic Zone (SEZ “Tomsk”) has been recently created to foster cultural, scientific and educational potential, in line with the strategic socio-economic development of the entire region until 2030 (https://tomsk.gov.ru/cstrategiysotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitija). Within the SEZ, innovation centres and several business incubators have been set up through a collaborative approach between universities, organisations, businesses
and local government (the so-called Triple Helix). Despite “the willingness of local universities to act as generators of ideas”, the cooperative approach and the transformation of new ideas into innovations has been limited by the strong governmental interventions preventing “effective interactions between enterprises and the universities” or local communities (Oplakanskaia et al., 2019, p. 44). For the same reason, the creative industries clustering processes did not reflect the potential of many and different cultural initiatives (e.g. interactive art exhibitions, music folk festivals in former factories and museums’ nights) that could instead benefit from urban activism and civic engagement. As promoted by the local municipality since 2012, the smart city strategy (Tomsk 3.0) has focussed on the development of a creative, efficient, comfortable and competitive place through intensive knowledge transfer clustering, city incubators and design workshop (Goncharova et al., 2014). The smart city project did not evolve from its initial implementation of technology-led solutions and top-down urban planning, as perceived by the city community.

**Place branding approach**

Tomsk is a well-established cultural and educational city in which creative and innovative clustering strategies have been adopted to attract knowledgeable people and businesses. Since tourism is not a crucial element of the strategic development of the city, destination development activities are carried out at regional level within the Department of Culture and Tourism administration, with limited resources and without the involvement of other private or public tourism stakeholders (Tomsk Region, 2014). In addition to such fragmented destination governance, tourism strategies in the region tend to rely on the ‘spin-off from other socio-economic activities, mainly innovation or cultural activities, rather than a primary goal of public policy (Halkier et al., 2019, p. 277). This also applies to the city itself, with impact on its branding strategies. In the light of cultural and educational peculiarity, Tomsk city has been commonly associated with the long-standing image of “Siberian Athens”. To position the city at international level, the 2010–2020 strategy development for the whole region has envisioned Tomsk rebranding initiatives including tourism and hospitality concepts as well as “creative” and “smart” city attributes (Keksel et al., 2016). The attempt to change the “Siberian Athens” perceived image failed, as resulted from the 2015 “competition for the best conception of visual and verbal style of territorial brand of Tomsk Region” contest proposed by the Tomsk Region Administration in association with some private organisations and involving both residents and visitors (Skripnik and Kornilova, 2016). This is essentially consistent with the socio-economic structure of the city and the large population of students, which are commonly involved in grassroots creative activities and mostly excluded from actual decision-making (Keksel et al., 2016). In spite of relying on creative clustering, techno parks or the side-effect of innovative activities as “a ‘device’ that will create new urban images” (Kolodii et al., 2017), participatory governance, open innovation and human-centred approaches have been recognised fundamental to the smart development of the city as destination to be brand (Halkier et al., 2016, 2019).

**Creativity, innovation and the smart branding of destinations**

Considering the “evidences” of Milan and Tomsk, effective smart destination branding requires the integration of collective creativity processes and practices into promotional strategies that cannot ignore the city attributes and smart urban development approaches. Yet, differences between top-down (Tomsk) and bottom-up (Milan) approaches to smart city initiatives and urban innovations equally reflects into destination branding strategies.

The problematic view of the city as a product to brand has been widely addressed in literature (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006; Govers, 2013). Within the broad notion of place marketing, city branding and destination branding main problems concern the translation of corporate branding theories and models to urban locations (Kavaratzis, 2009). Despite the fact that destinations are difficult to be marketed and communicated as a single entity through a brand (Anholt, 2007) and the competing interests of the different stakeholders against such branded entity (Houghton and Stevens, 2011), the reference to corporate branding is merely supported by the shared similarities that can also be found in destination branding being dissimilar to product branding (Kavaratzis, 2009). Instead of promoting each product/service of an organisation to targeted
consumers and audiences, corporate branding also aims at shareholders and stakeholders. Corporate branding embodies all products/services into the unique brand of the whole organisation. In the same fashion, urban destination branding integrates all diverse tangible and intangible attributes of the place into a city brand to attract tourists and investors. To differentiate and compete at global level, organisations construct a distinctive brand as combination of the respective core values and strategic purpose (corporate identity) to be positioned among competitors and proposed in a verbal/visual way (brand image) to influence the perception and choices of consumers (Kavaratzis, 2009). As an intangible corporate asset, the successful relationship between the brand and the consumer can even be valued and measured through “brand equity” (Aaker, 1992). For several interrelated reasons, however, corporate branding strategies cannot be applied sic et simpliciter to tourist cities. First and foremost, the digital business ecosystem of cities is not comparable to any sort of organisation, whether small or big. Being a place for people to live, work, invest and visit, the city as a destination comprise a large array of tourist product/services, overlapping with non-tourist ones, produced and consumed by a heterogeneous and ever-changing (in role, location and number) amalgam of stakeholders. Even if unified under a unique brand, the multiple of tourist brands aiming at people that plan to visit the destination tend to “conflict” one another and with non-tourist organisation city branding or the existing image of the city (name and logo). Second, the potential tourists are confronted with the intangible and experiential nature of tourist product and the destination as a whole, with impact on all components of the brand construct (identity, positioning and image). In contrast to the other product/service functional utility and customer journey, which implies a shorter purchase and consumption time span, the benefits of travelling to a destination for hedonic reasons can be appreciated after spending time and actually experiencing the place. The destination brand–tourists relationship is consequently more core complex and less straightforward. Third, the intangible and tangible attributes (e.g. heritage and attractions) underpinning the brand identity of the destination cannot be easily changed or reshaped to meet consumers’ needs and wants. Hence, the complexity in positioning a “competitive identity” and the common stress on the “development of a visual identity”, which is expressed through “logos, taglines, communication campaigns, touristic routes with their websites, applications, brochures and signs” (Deserti, 2016, p. 66).

It is beyond the scope of this work to re-examine the vast literature on corporate branding and product branding in relation to destinations, but to address the implications of smartness on destination branding. Provided that city branding strongly relies on place identity as perceived and valued by both residents and visitors (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006), the smartness of a tourist destination has also a significant impact on its branding strategies (Romão et al., 2018). Being a crucial part of the process, the brand identity of a smart destination is the intangible construct arising from the integration of all “smart” attributes into a brand built, recognised and delivered through the destination image by all stakeholders involved. With the support of advanced ICTs embedded in municipal infrastructures, in fact, the core urban smartness components centred on people (human capital, social capital, entrepreneurship and innovation) can enhance the relationship between the brand and targeted tourists as well as local residents. A destination branded as “smart” should possess the capability to attract knowledgeable, skilled and competent people (Caragliu et al., 2011), along with tourists, without affecting the co-creation of socio-economic well-being (Romão et al., 2018). To achieve this, destinations need to develop a branding system combining the human capital (internal and external) with market forces, network capital and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Beritelli and Laessser, 2011) to co-create a brand through the participation of tourists and locals (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). To serve as a reputational tool driven by socio-economic benefits, rather than financial or economic gains (Anholt, 2010), a brand defined by such smart attributes also requires a collaborative urban environment in which open innovation is fostered by entrepreneurs interacting and exchanging knowledge and ideas with local people and tourists (García et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2016). A people-centred smart city approach can, therefore, sustain successful branding strategies aligned with the urban development of the destination. With positive impact on intrinsic components of destination identity, innovative solutions stemming from collective creativity, and particularly social ones, can help to bridge the digital (e.g. access and use), spatial (e.g. central vs peripheral) and socio-economic (e.g. income, education, private/public services) divide hindering
social and human capital, participatory governance and entrepreneurship (Anholt, 2007; Deserti, 2016). Destination branding can be more effective in conveying and maintaining the promise of a memorable urban experience through creativity-based innovations improving the quality of life (i.e. accessibility, mobility, connectivity, liveability and environment) of residents and tourists (Deserti, 2016). This approach to innovation is highly important for the incorporation of the socio-technical smartness attributes in branding strategies to avoid the negative externalities of urban mass tourism or the so-called overtourism. Although it is not the guilty party for potential conflicts between local residents and tourists/new residents (Romão et al., 2018), the experiential gap between destination identity and its perception by an increasing number of people attracted through a branding image not reflecting the reality is the reason why overcrowded cities and busy tourist destinations rely on creativity, innovation and “smart” attributes to reposition/rebrand themselves (Séraphin et al., 2019). So, a smart approach to branding requires a holistic and integrated view of a destination combining endogenous and exogenous resources to mitigate social tensions, uncertainties and asymmetries. In this respect, creativity arising from endogenous urban smartness has greater positive impact on branding than exogenous factors (Meroni, 2007; McKenna, 2018), which are often used to support the imagery of the creative city as much as smart cities are labelled “smart” (Florida, 2003; Vanolo, 2008; Richards, 2014). New smart cities built and branded as “creative clusters, research and innovation labs and living urban showrooms” have been acknowledged as particular cases raising questions concerning the potential for citizens to “adopt a more active role in adding more authenticity and human value to the smart environments they live in”, rather than being “mere users of smart environments” (Kolotouchkina and Seisdedos, 2018, pp. 121-2).

Conclusions: furthering smart destinations branding

The drivers of creativity and innovation, as presented in Table I, play a key role in smart destinations branding strategies. The different approaches to smart city developments and destination branding of Milan and Tomsk showed that top-down initiatives fostering urban innovation and creativity cannot ignore effective participatory governance and the HSC perspective. Even if the effectiveness of branding smart cities for tourists has not been fully treated here, it can be seen as part of the challenges, solutions and strategies involving residents and tourists. As an integral part of the smart development of tourist cities, branding should embrace a participatory governance approach to avoid city–destination image conflicts and residents–tourists tensions. Several studies have suggested the participation of all stakeholders, particularly local residents, in smart city/destination branding strategies. Yet, in addition to the need of further theoretical refinement, very few works have addressed the active role of tourists as “temporary citizens”. Even if branding is not the main cause of overtourism, more critical and in-depth knowledge of their direct and indirect relationship is essential to destination marketers to implement effective and sustainable brands. Future research in this area could range from local government policies to experiential practices shared by tourists and residents, with implications for the creation of the urban place identity. The creation of a destination image in conflict with the existing city image, the gap between the potential of smart cities and their actual status as well as the adoption of creative strategies aimed only at attracting external talents and resources (e.g. knowledgeable people and investments) are all major issues of smart destinations branding. Rather than being mere labels, the “smart” and “creative” cities/destinations have been increasingly recognised as entwined concepts underpinning the urban place image in promotional strategies. The role that creativity plays in the conceptualisation of urban destinations smartness is connected to the diverse, specific and endogenous attributes of the city fostering open innovation to face the uncertainties and asymmetries of such ecosystems. Given that creativity on its own is clearly not enough to understand such broad and complex field of research, future studies in smart destinations branding could be oriented towards: the assessment/evaluation of the impact of creativity as endogenous enabler of destinations identity; the impact of effectual reasoning and serendipity on the creation of a smart destination image; the role of creativity in the discourse over the authenticity of smart destinations; the expanded view of structural holes within the networked urban ecosystem in relation to the Living Labs methodology, with attention to the so-called “Jacobs spillovers”; the impact of creativity on open
innovation in existing/old and new smart cities as destinations; and the empirical effect of creativity over smart destinations resilience. Therefore, more research from complexity science, ecology, system theory and human geography is needed besides empirical studies into actual urban living environments. With this in mind, the most important practical implication of this contribution is the focus on the people-centred approach needed to advance smart urban development in regards to branding strategies, rather than technological matters. “There needs to be a re-orientation in how the city is conceived […] and a re-casting of the epistemology of urban science”, with attention to ethical issues and values of and beyond smart technologies adoption, as suggested by Kitchin (2016, p. 11).

References


Further reading


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The significance of the contribution of children to conceptualising the destination of the future

Hugues Seraphin and Sarah Green

Abstract

Purpose – As there is a growing demand of cutting-edge technology as part of the tourism experience from the digital native population and because little is known about this group as tourism consumers despite the fact they will be the core tourism spender of tomorrow, the purpose of this paper is to give children an opportunity to share their vision of the destination of the future.

Design/methodology/approach – From a methodological point of view, a qualitative approach is adopted. Children were asked to draw, communicate and display their view on their Winchester of the future. The data collected are used to formulate an innovative, smart-based future-fit management approach for products and services design.

Findings – To fully meet the needs and expectation of the coming generation of tourists, Winchester (city located in the South of England, and surrounded by some of the most visited UK destinations, namely London, Oxford and Cambridge) will have to adopt an ambidextrous management approach when developing products and services for customers of the future. This ambidextrous management approach will balance metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design.

Originality/value – There is a scarcity of studies on children in tourism research despite the fact the industry and academics recognise the value and impact of children, and more specifically, their role in purchase decisions. Equally important, this research is also going to contribute to the body of knowledge on smart management of destinations.

Keywords Children, Innovation, Smart destination

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The use of cutting-edge technology by destination marketing organisations (DMO) to improve the experience of visitors and gain competitiveness is one of the characteristics of smart destinations (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). There is a growing demand for cutting-edge technology as part of the tourism experience from the digitised population, namely generation “Y”, also referred to as “millennials” or “digital natives” (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019; Jovicic, 2019). Practically, it means that smart destinations need to cater to smart tourists as they increasingly digital natives. Despite the absence of consensus regarding their birth years, digital natives are more commonly referred to as being born between the early 1980s and early 2000s (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Apart from the fact that this group use information, communication technologies (ICT) intensively to plan their trips, and that they are influenced by user-generated content on social media (Jovicic, 2019), little is known about this group as tourism consumers, even though they will be the core tourism spender of tomorrow (Seraphin and Yallop, 2019). In order to anticipate the needs of the next generation of smart tourists, it is important to look at children.

The results of Seraphin and Yallop’s (2019) research are more recent evidence that children have been overlooked in tourism literature (Gaines et al., 2004; Lugosi et al., 2016). For Poria and Timothy (2014) as well as for Nickerson and Jurowski (2001), there is a scarcity of studies
on children in tourism research despite the fact the industry and academics recognise the value and impact of children, and more specifically, their dominant role in choice of activities and purchase decisions (Wang et al., 2016). Giving more importance to children (young consumers) is all the more an issue when it is suggested that children are the tourists of the future (Cullingford, 1995; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015). One of the challenges for DMOs is to adapt to technological changes and communicate more effectively with this generation of consumers born within the new technology and digital revolution that contributes further to the globalisation of information (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018). It is therefore very important for DMOs to understand current young consumers, not only to meet the current needs of families, but more importantly, to anticipate what the destination of the future will be and how to conceptualise it for them.

The purpose of this study is to share a smart and innovative approach in terms of a research method that can be applied by destinations in order to collect data from the tourists of the future, namely children (Cullingford, 1995; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015). Winchester (UK) is going to be used as a case study. The research question is therefore:

**RQ1.** What are the perceptions of children regarding the conceptualising of the smart destinations of the future?

The organisation of the paper will be largely but, not exclusively influenced by the following framework:

1. Children are the tourists of the future (Cullingford, 1995, p. 121; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015, p. 145).
2. "Digital natives" think and behave differently to the previous generation of "digital immigrants".
3. The role of the DMO includes market research, product development and sustainable development of the destination (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018).
4. To gain competitive advantage, tourism organisations have to forecast the future (Richard, 2017).

From a methodological point of view, this research is going to adopt a qualitative approach. Children will be asked to draw their view on how Winchester should be positioned with a focus on the new generation of information communication technology (cloud computing, networking, 3G technology, artificial intelligence, etc.) that should be put in place by Winchester to meet the needs of their generation as tourists of the future. Drawing, as a research approach, is a widely accepted non-verbal communication tool used to collect data (Radic, 2017). The data collected will be used to formulate the strengths and limitations of the research method applied to collect data from children.

The findings of this research may encourage the Winchester DMO (and other DMOs) to adopt similar methods developed in this study in their marketing strategies to attract younger audiences, which has previously been identified as a challenge (Winchester CC Unconference, 2018).

2. **Contextual framework**

“Winchester is a city renowned for having a deep and expansive history and a treasure trove of English heritage” (Visit Winchester, 2018, p. 6). Heritage tourism as a niche market is to be assimilated to special interest tourism (SIT) (Park, 2014). Winchester is therefore a SIT destination (Séraphin et al., 2018). SIT occurs when the traveller’s motivations and decision making are primarily influenced by a specific activity or setting (Trauer, 2006). SIT appears to accommodate the varied and specialised needs and tastes of tourists and is opposed to mass consumption and non-commercialised individual travel (Park, 2014; Trauer, 2006). SIT is also associated with people’s happiness, as this form of tourism is a result of people’s desire for quality of life (Trauer, 2006). Séraphin et al. (2018) are defining Winchester as a special interest tourism and event destination with a range of events and festivals all year round. The events organised fall under four categories: music and comedy events; art and literature events; children events; and finally food and drink events. From a geographical point of view, Winchester is located in the south of England. As for tourism, in 2015 (the latest data available),
Winchester was visited by 5.4 m people, who spent £199.010.00 (Tourism South East, 2015 (Online); DMP, 2015–2020 (Online)). It is also worth mentioning that Winchester is surrounded by some of the most visited destinations in the country namely London, Oxford and Cambridge (Wordatlas (Online)).

3. Literature review

3.1 DMOs and destinations competitive advantages

Part of the role of the DMO is to ensure the competitiveness of the destination (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018). Many factors can contribute to the competitive advantage of a destination. Among these are:

- the image of the destination (Saraniemi and Kylanen, 2011);
- the strategy used to brand the destination (Pike and Mason, 2011; Sériaphin Gowreesunkar and Ambaye, 2016);
- the use of heritage in the branding of the destination (Brown and Cave, 2010; Collison and Spears, 2010; Dion and Mazzalovo, 2016; Leask and Rihova, 2010);
- cultural tourism (Cisneros-Martinez and Fernandez-Morales, 2015);
- repositioning strategy (Chacko and Marcell, 2008);
- the use of social media and other online materials as a marketing tool (Hudson and Hudson, 2013; Kim and Ko, 2012; Sériaphin Gowreesunkar and Ambaye, 2016; Sériaphin, Butcher and Korstanje, 2016; Stankov et al., 2010);
- organisation ambidexterity (Sériaphin et al., 2018; Sériaphin and Butcher, 2018);
- the aesthetics of the destination (Krillova et al., 2014);
- the quality of life or happiness of local residents (Croes et al., 2018; Ivlevs, 2017; Uysal et al., 2016); and
- good relationships with local residents and visitors (Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge, 2009; Michel, 2000; Miller and McTavish, 2013).

To that list could be added using cutting-edge technology to enhance visitors’ experience (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Indeed, most recently, becoming a smart destination has been identified as a factor that influences destination competitiveness (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019; Jovicic, 2019; Koo et al., 2016).

3.2 Smart destinations and competitiveness

A smart destination is a recent concept that has appeared with the digital revolution, and the development of tourism practices. The concept of a smart destination is still in progress (Jovicic, 2019). This new term has been defined by Jovicic (2019, p.278), as “a knowledge-based destination, where ICT is used to provide a technological platform on which information and knowledge relating to tourism could be instantly exchanged”. Jovicic (2019, p. 276), also added that in smart destinations “knowledge and information are accessible to all stakeholders, facilitating them to carry out continuous innovation of their activities” (Jovicic, 2019, p. 276). As for Boes et al. (2016), they are arguing the fact that the objective of smart technologies and techniques in smart destinations is to achieve the goal of the destination. They also added the importance of connectedness between the stakeholders as being central. Finally, Buhalis and Amaranaganga (2015) and Gretzel et al. (2015) argued that the consumer data that are then used by the destination to improve the quality of their experience, and a smart business ecosystem that includes factors such as interconnected stakeholders, the exchange of resources and co-creation, is the backbone of smart destinations (Jovicic, 2019). Other key elements in the concepts of smart destinations are smart technologies such as cloud services, smart devices, big data management, the connection between various platforms (Koo et al., 2016). When discussing smart destinations, it is also important to refer to social media as it plays an important role.
role in the consumer’s decision making; in turn playing a significant role in the DMO marketing strategy to reach global audience (Jovicic, 2019). In the same line of thoughts, Séraphin (2015) and Séraphin, Butcher and Korstanje (2016), also added that in the case of destinations with a negative image the use of social media and visual online learning materials are extremely important in the process of educating and convincing visitors (including visitors from the diaspora) to visit.

The smartness of the destination contributes to its competitiveness, which is its “ability to provide higher quality travel experiences to the visitors than other destinations” (Koo et al., 2016, p. 562). Practically, smart tourism destinations provide a unique and personalised experience to visitors (Koo et al., 2016). The purpose of the smart destination is also to contribute and enhance the quality of life of local residents and other stakeholders (Boes et al., 2016).

In smart tourism destinations, human capital, defined as “the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Keeley, 2007, p. 29) is also a key component (Boes et al., 2016). This is reiterated by Meijer and Bolivar (2016, p. 7): “The smartness of a city refers to its ability to attract human capital and to mobilise this human capital in collaborations between the various actors through the use of information and communication technologies”. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) added that human capital could drive a city to be smarter as a result city should involve citizens in the co-creation process of products and services.

As a result of the above literature review, the authors of this study have involved children (who are also stakeholders) from Winchester to the co-creation of the future design of their city, as the results of the study could help Winchester to gain some competitive advantages. The children considered for this study are digital natives. As such, they are according to Femenia-Serra et al. (2019), the perfect potential tourists for smart destinations.

### 3.3 Children in the tourism industry

Dowae et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of children in sporting events and more generally in leisure by arguing that they are a stakeholder group with distinct needs and interests that need to be taken into account when planning events. Radic (2017) did the same but for the cruise sector, as he explained that children play a very important role in the choice of Cruise Company. For Lugosi et al. (2016), children are extremely important for the hospitality sector. They even refer to them as sovereign consumers and have to be seen as active decision makers. For Lugosi et al. (2016) it seems that children are even more important than adults (parents and carers) as their satisfaction influences the satisfaction of parents and carers. As for Thornton et al. (1997), children are active participants or negotiators when it comes to the choice of holidays. They also explained that the children’s influence lies in the fact that the satisfaction of parents is largely influenced by the satisfaction of children. The influence of children on family holiday choice is not something new, in other words, it is a well-established fact. With reference to the importance of this segment, Lugosi et al. (2016) are explicitly claiming that it is extremely important to identify, acknowledge and meet their needs, as doing so contribute to create a positive emotion that encourages and increases loyalty and positive-word-of-mouth. Customers’ satisfaction is a result of the products and services offered to them (Albayrak and Cabr, 2015). Indeed, Cullingford (1995) explained that children have a limited knowledge of the world and their knowledge of the world is built by comparing other destinations with their country of residence. Their choice of destination is based more on the ability of the destination and resort to entertain them, on the image they have of the destination, and on what is done to make things pleasant for them (Cullingford, 1995). By acknowledging the importance for the industry to consider the needs of children, Lugosi et al. (2016) agree with Cullingford (1995) who claimed that the tourism industry is still not targeting children directly. Thornton et al. (1997, p. 287) shared the same thought as they also added that “the role of children has been under-researched and under-valued”. That said, some sectors of the hospitality industry are doing well in terms of meeting the needs of children. Among these are food service chains (restaurants, café, pubs and bars) and theme parks (such as Legoland) which are providing family friendly service-scapes by adapting the design of the venue (colour of the venue; type of food; staff attitude; facilities for children to play) to meet the needs of this segment (Johns and Gymiothy, 2002; Lugosi et al., 2016; Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001).
The children in Winchester, who are digital natives, can play a significant role on the future competitiveness of Winchester as a smart destination. In order to achieve this, it is important to understand now, how they are envisioning the destination in the future with regards to ICT.

4. Methodology

4.1 Qualitative research with children

Greig et al. (2007) are arguing that qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for doing research with children. They also added that this approach should be prioritised by people working with children. Equally interesting, Greig et al. (2007, p. 138) added: “children represent an excellent source of the kind of data that are at the heart of qualitative research – rich descriptions in words and pictures that capture children’s experience”. Finally, Greig et al. (2007) also added that for this type of research it is important to recognise the limitations.

4.2 Doing research with children: the importance of drawing

Visual methods are becoming very popular in tourism research (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). Visual methods covers the study of materials such as, images in tourism brochures; postcards; postage stamps; online materials; landscape photographs (Jokela and Raento, 2012); video (Pocock et al., 2012); drawing (Cannon Hunter, 2012); etc. Incorporating visual methods in tourism research is important because a key feature in tourism is image; allowing access to knowledge that is not accessible using non-visual methods like texts, numbers, graphs; this enables academics to share knowledge beyond academia; etc. (Rakic and Chambers, 2012).

As for drawing methodology in tourism research, it is used to understand people’s impressions; perceptions towards places, things or persons (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). Additionally, when analysing and/or interpreting drawing, it is important to bear in mind that some participants are attempting to draw things as they appear (in their memory). In that case it is an “objective” drawing. Other participants are not attempting to draw things as they appear but more a concept. In that case it is a “metaphorical” drawing (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). It is also notable that “the age, gender, cultural background, socio-economic conditions, education, nationality and other characteristics of respondents will have an effect on how they draw. The skill and level of detail in the drawing is related to education or training, attentiveness to the environment or the level of involvement with the research questions” (Rakic and Chambers, 2012, p. 134).

The type of activities, i.e. drawing used in this study, to collect data could be assimilated to what Poris (2006) calls “Empowering fun”. In other words, activities that enable children to get other people to listen to their ideas, build things or put things together, exploring and discovering new things or creating something they are proud of. Such activities used to collect the data could also be assimilated to “creative fun”. Among others these include activities like drawing, colouring or painting (Poris, 2006). Whitebread and O’Sullivan (2012, p. 197) would have referred to this activity as “pretend play”, that is to say “a play in which children begin to communicate their transformations and collectively transform objects, people and situations in order to create non-literal ‘as if’ situations”. This paper is subsequently supporting the fact that data on children perception of a destination can be collected using empowering, creative fun activities and pretend play. This paper is also subsequently arguing that the voice of children is important and should be taken into consideration in destination planning. Dowse et al. (2018) are also arguing that children should be taken into consideration when planning mega-sport events, because they are a specific stakeholder group with distinct needs and interests. That said, they are also acknowledging the fact that their status in the society excludes them from the decision-making processes, despite the fact that the decisions taken by adults might affect their rights and interests. In this research study, children were given an opportunity to share their views on the environment they live in. This approach could be considered as innovative because currently children are invisible in the decision-making process (Dowse et al., 2018). Additionally, Visser (2015) is arguing that change and innovation will come from stakeholders’ engagement.
4.3 Research design

Children were asked to draw, to communicate and display their views. This method was used because it is the best way to have children to convey their opinions fully and accurately (Radic, 2017). Natural environments (classroom, playground, etc.) are ideal areas for research for children. It is also ideal that the person collecting the data has extensive experience of working with children (Greig et al., 2007). The data were collected at “Birdhouse Design Club”, the after school club for children, founded and owned by the co-author of this paper.

This research was also designed in the context of a win-win approach in which: “Marketing partners win because they can get their brand, products or services closer to kids and their families; children win because they have fun and educational place to play, learn and have a good time and parents win because they see their kids having fun and also learning important life lessons” (Lonsway, 2016, p. 246). In this research study, children were actually given opportunity to voice their opinions about how their city should be in the future and how marketers should communicate with them. In nutshell, during the time of the activity used to collect the data, the kids were the decision makers.

As for the basis of contemporary ethics in research with children, it is important that children have the right to participate in research, just as they have a right to refuse. The children as well as their parents must be aware of the implications of the research (Greig et al., 2007). Anonymity, confidentiality, assessment of risk of harms and ethics were taken into consideration when conducting this study, as a specific approach is necessary when dealing with children when conducting research (Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001; Poria and Timothy, 2014). It is also important to mention that this project, and more specifically the activities carried out with the children to collect data, was submitted and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Winchester (England).

4.4 Sampling

For Rakic and Chambers (2012), a sample in a drawing methodology is considered as valid if participants for the study: have some connection with the research problem; have been specifically recruited to draw; are willing and able to draw; are able to provide intelligence concerning their drawings; are at least thirty (the sample does not necessarily have to be large); and can respond verbally to researchers’ questions. Long (2018) also added that for research on children and play, sample could be small in scale. For instance, Radic (2017) collected data on children’s cruise experience using a sample of 12 children.

The sample selected for this study meets the above criteria. Initially there were 120 children aged between 5 and 11 years, both boys and girls (primary key stages one and two). They all attend schools in the Winchester area and have done so for at least two years. All live in or around the city. They have English as their first language, although up to five of the children have one parent originating from another country which was unspecified. Whilst a statement of socio-economic background of these children was not a requirement, it can be deducted that, as these particular parents pay for subscription to this club (and these children are not funded by the school for this), they come from potentially financially comfortable households.

From previous lessons with the children it appears most have travelled both within the UK and abroad (e.g. on ski holidays or city tours) and they all had access to tablets, parents phones or laptop computers so were fairly tech-savvy (this again was not a requirement for this study). These children attend the “Birdhouse Design Club” regularly and therefore have some artistic or creative interests and are familiar with ideas generation and being encouraged to think openly in a pressure-free environment.

Before working with these children, parents were asked to review an information sheet outlining the scope of the study and in particular the intended use of any data generated – this ensured that parents understood that all data would be anonymous. Parents were asked to confirm on the accompanying consent form that they were happy for their children to take part, that they understood the child’s participation was voluntary and that the child could withdraw at any time, as well as the fact that the child’s personal details such as name, age and school
would not be revealed to persons outside of this project. Parents then returned these consent forms to the author.

After reviewing the approach, it was decided that a smaller sample group of 30 children was more useful; these children were from the older sections of the group and were therefore able to articulate their ideas more effectively visually and verbally. Table I offers an overall view of the sample selected for the study.

The data were collected during a period of one hour during a relaxed classroom session after usual school hours. The children drew individually but sat on tables of their choice in order for informal dialogue between them to take place. It is from this smaller sample that the key themes below were formed.

4.5 Instructions given to the sample

This working session was led by the second author of this paper who is also the founding director of “Birdhouse Design Club”. The following paragraphs are going to: first, provide the exact verbatim used to prompt the children; second, provide a list of material given to the children; and third, the context and set up of the activity (timing, individual task, etc.).

Using a child friendly language, the participants were asked to provide two main drawings/sketches. However, before this it was important that all children had a basic understanding of the concept of a networked or smart city, and concepts such as the use of WiFi. An “unbiased” sheet was provided with a brief introduction from the investigator to outline the city concept.

The brief introduction speech given was the following:

Do you know what a Smart City is? It is where cities use technology to help us do things better, for example using a card to store information (or money) on our library books, bus tickets and other transport journeys’. Perhaps smart cities can tell you all about a city if you are a visitor, or let you ‘play’ with the city on your phones or tablets [...]. What do you think the smart city of the future might be like, and how would you use technology to visit Winchester?

Data were not formerly collected from this initial sheet as it was designed introduce the concept as a “warm-up” activity rather than for them to visualise their ideas. Most children did appear to understand the essence of a connected city to some extent.

In the first activity of 20 min duration, the children were asked to show ideas on a pre-printed sheet, without any verbal prompt, for, first, how tablet technology might be used prior to a visit to help decision making and visit planning and, second. how mobile technology might be utilised on arrival. This was gently introduced on the sheet by the creation of two fictional characters, Shani and Luke who were planning their visit.

In the second activity of 25 min duration the children were introduced to the concept of augmented reality. Grier et al. (2012) described augmented reality on mobile as “apps that overlay information such as restaurant choices, maps, etc. directly on the user’s phone”, though they were quick to point out that one might look like a “proverbial” tourist whilst pointing their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>National statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6 years old = 4</td>
<td>Employers in large establishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 years old = 4</td>
<td>Higher managerial and administrative occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 years old = 3</td>
<td>Higher professional occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 years old = 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6 years old = 6</td>
<td>Employers in large establishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 years old = 2</td>
<td>Higher managerial and administrative occupations</td>
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<td>8 years old = 4</td>
<td>Higher professional occupations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 years old = 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 years old = 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors
smartphone down the street – perhaps less of a concern for children than adults. Children were free to create their own imaginings such as mystery characters within the city space and the proceeding conversation was facilitated by asking the children to describe how they might see the technology coming to life.

The familiar and highly successful game Pokemon Go which was launched in 1995 (Weinberger, 2016) was shown to the children as an easy-to-grasp starting point for this concept. The children could then take these ideas forward into their own thinking and they were encouraged not to feel limited by the devices shown or the gameplay featured.

The methodology used to collect the data could be summarised as follow (Figure 1).

5. Thematic analysis

5.1 Theory and application

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from children. This method is defined as “a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in the data set” (Brunt et al., 2017, p. 242). To do so, in this study, a four stage framework was used. It is an adaptation of Brunt et al. (2017) framework model to for thematic analysis:

■ Stage 1: familiarisation – this stage was used to become familiar with the data collected and make notes about themes coming from the data.
■ Stage 2: identifying a thematic framework – notes are organised into recurring themes.
■ Stage 3: indexing – the thematic framework (where specific features of drawings are indexed using headings) is applied to the data collected in a systematic way.
■ Stage 4: interpretation of data – this stage involves the evaluation and discussion of the data collected.

5.2 Findings

In reviewing the sketches created (some examples are included in Table II), several key themes became apparent.

These can be classified under the following headings with various levels of gameplay considered:

■ mapping, navigation and plotting;
■ fictional recreation/reimagining of the city;
■ topical information – factual data;
■ characterisation; and
■ collecting/leagues

Mapping, navigation and plotting. Many of the children liked the idea of being able to find their way around in a fun way, this included using a shared map on which they might spot virtual sightings of named objects (King Alfred or a ghost for example), place them on a map and compare with other sightings by previous or current visitors.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1** Methodology to follow when collecting data from children

Source: The authors
Fictional recreation/reimagining of the city. This was the most popular theme and the children had many ideas concerning reimagining the city space. Some excitement was generated when discussing the prior fictional destruction of the city by monsters or other dinosaurs, which could be visualised on the mobile devices, before visiting the supposedly now rebuilt city and trying to find such characters hiding behind buildings or in doorways using augmented reality animations popping up over real views when walking around.

Another popular idea was “tweaking” popular destinations such as the cathedral by enabling pop-up characters or features appearing when approaching, using augmented reality. Examples were seen of the cathedral with animals and other characters appearing in windows as well as other historic venues and even shops as points for activation.

Broader imaginings such as the addition of rainbows and mythical flying unicorns were popular contemporary motifs sparking the children’s imagination and pinpointing the city as a “special” place to spot things.

Table II Themes visualised by the children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fictional recreation/reimagining of the city</th>
<th>Pop-up characters in popular venues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monster destruction</td>
<td>Pop-up characters in popular venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special sightings</td>
<td>Contemporary graphic characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors

Topical information – factual data. Some children conceptualised the idea of holding the camera on their mobile device over a venue and seeing useful facts and figures appear before them. This was a smaller number of children than the fictional reimagining children and was voiced rather than visualised.
Characterisation. The integration of historical landmarks with cartoon characters was popular and these included contemporary graphic motifs such as unicorns and rainbows, but also abstract shapes and other fun characters. These ideas primarily came from the female children.

Collecting/leagues. Collecting was broadly discussed and the children liked the idea of visiting places and building up a virtual collection – museum artefacts and more abstract objects were mentioned. The competition side of collecting and comparing seemed to appeal. The children found it harder to visualise this but articulated it fairly commonly and with enthusiasm.

6. Discussion

6.1 Representation of the subject matter by children and interpretation

The general agreement is that research involving children is totally valid and also has the benefit of giving a voice to them (Greig et al., 2007, p. 187). That said, it is also important to highlight the fact that they do not always understand or describe the world as we know it; children have their own perspectives; results of research with children are only probable; children are subjective by nature (Greig et al., 2007). Therefore, doing research based on children means working on assumptions (Greig et al., 2007). Using a cognitive approach, this paper is giving more importance to the potential of children who took part to the study as subjects of research rather than their performance in drawing. Despite the fact that Greig et al. (2007) are acknowledging that interpreting children’s responses are related to social and cognitive factors, they also acknowledge that drawing is a good tool to use to collect information from them because it is fun and children enjoy drawing. That said, they also highlighted that “drawings are particularly susceptible to false interpretations [...] It is important to operate in an open, exploratory manner with children and their drawings” (Greig et al., 2007, p. 95).

Winchester of the future was drawn by children mainly in a metaphorical manner (Table II), as they were not always attempting to draw things as they would appear in the real life (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). Their approach could be assimilated to a model of creative destruction. This destruction consists in the rebranding of the destination; the development of interactive material that enables the understanding of current artefact and heritage whilst integrating modern artefacts or popular characters with this new generation. This strategy of creative destruction is subsequently calling for DMO to adopt an ambidextrous management approach, in other words the addressing of two apparently antithetical goals simultaneously (Séraphin and Butcher, 2018). In the case of this study, the apparent antithetical goals are the metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design; but also about meeting the needs of current customers (parents) and customers of the future (children). The ambidextrous approach introduced in this paper is a more inclusive approach to defining and involving stakeholders in the design and planning process of the destination.

6.2 Reliability and replication

At this point, it is legitimate to discuss the value and limitations of the results of this study. The value added could be:

1. Children are stakeholders and as such, their view should be taken into consideration (Dowse et al., 2018).

2. The activities used by the authors to collect the data were presented to the children as play. Chick (2017), explained that play can be compared to simulations or models of the real world cultural activities.

3. Play also indicates how children perceive their position and role within a specific environment (Willet, 2015).

4. In the same way, pictorial user-generated content could be considered as a reflection of users’ perception of a destination (Stepchenkova and Zhan, 2013), the data collected from children as part of this research paper could therefore be considered as a representative of their view on their place of residence.
5. “Children are not mere recipients of their environment, but they influence what goes on within their worlds and are active in making the environment what it is” (Greig et al., 2007: 187).

6. Many companies are collecting and implementing ideas collecting from children using “empowering fun” activities in order to demonstrate that they are listening them and are valuing their opinions. Kellogg’s, MandM’s, Lego, etc. are among the companies that have implemented children’s ideas (Poris, 2006).

That said, the results of this study also have some limitations:

1. “Today’s children are born into a reality that is filtered through the media” (Wood, 2018).

2. In play, children often emulate some characters that are not often real or that are long gone. In other words, the forms that plays are taking do not always reflect the current reality (Frost, 2015).

3. Children do not always describe the world as we know it (Greig et al., 2007).

Looking at the results of this study, the data collected shows that children’s view of Winchester is not reflecting the reality of life but filtered by characters seen on TV (mythical creatures, etc.). Notwithstanding this specific case, children’s points of view has some value and can be fully or partly implemented by organisations.

This study offered a method (that can be applied to other context) to follow. That said, it is also worth adding that, the results of this study are specific to Winchester and cannot be simply applied to a different destination without consideration, as with a group of children from a different country the results of the study would have been different. Indeed, “children do not represent a homogeneous group. Within the overarching phase of childhood there exist a multitude of differences, differences which can be as a result of age, gender, ethnicity and culture, education, social class, upbringing and so on” (Greig et al., 2007, p. 183). Their perception of the world is therefore very different (Greig et al., 2007; Kerr and Moore, 2015). Radic (2017), who conducted some research on children’s cruise experiences using Western children, argued that his results could be generalised if non-Western children were also used. Long (2018) also added that results on children and their play cannot be generalised or replicated.

Beyond collecting data for this study, the activity put in place to collect the data could be argued to have contributed to make the children more aware of their surrounding environment and attached to their environment, as pretend play contributes to both the self-regulation development of children that includes monitoring and control of emotional aspects of human functioning (Whitebread and O’Sullivan, 2012), but also their ability to think, as playing is essentially about how to think and learn (Lewis, 2017).

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of findings and implications

To fully meet the needs and expectation of the coming generation of tourists, Winchester will have to adopt an ambidextrous management approach when developing products and services for customers of the future. This ambidextrous management approach will balance metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design. The approach adopted in this paper is aiming at revolutionising children’s experiences and giving Winchester an edge by adopting an innovative approach in the development of tourism products for children, by asking them directly instead of interpreting their needs through their parents’ feedback. As at the moment the tourism industry is only perceived, developed and understood from the adults’ prism, this paper subsequently offers an alternative and subsequently fill a gap in literature. Because children are neither passive nor powerless, the tourism industry should not overlook their contribution in the development and management of destinations. Children are the best informants about themselves (Poria and Timothy, 2014). Because their parents are the customers of the present and the children customers of the future, destinations should adopt an ambidextrous management approach geared at meeting the needs of current and future customers.
Some members of the society such as economically disadvantaged women, ethnic minorities, children, homeless, the elderly, disabled people, etc. have been recognised and designated as disempowered (Hutton, 2016). The tourism and hospitality industry has done the same with some stakeholders. They are invisible and undermined, whereas they should be considered as equally important stakeholders (Cullingford, 1995; Dowse et al., 2018; Seraphin and Yallop, 2019; Thornton et al., 1997). The methodology adopted in this study could be applied to other disempowered stakeholder groups, such as immigrants or people with disabilities who might have problems articulating themselves and having a representation in regular planning meetings. This paper is making an important contribution to smart destination literature as it is adding the fact that smart destinations should strive for accessibility and inclusiveness and develop tools needed to achieve this from the very beginning of the process, namely design.

7.2 Future research

As social media has been identified as having a strong potential to engage consumers (Hudson and Hudson, 2013), it would be a logical move for DMOs to develop a platform where children could share their view on the development of their place of residence. At the moment only adults are surveyed (directly or indirectly). For instance, platforms like TripAdvisor are geared towards adults. As for research aiming at user-generated content or online reviews it is only based on adults (Kladou and Mavragani, 2015; Sparks et al., 2013).

References


Further reading


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Smart destination brands: semiotic analysis of visual and verbal signs

Ulrike Gretzel and Maria Collier de Mendonça

Abstract

Purpose – Smart tourism is a destination management approach that requires the buy-in of a myriad of stakeholders. Its many audiences and complexity demand the creation of meaningful brands to effectively position and communicate smart tourism initiatives. The purpose of this paper is to explore how smart tourism branding strategies have been implemented to communicate relevant values, benefits and attributes to industry stakeholders through institutional websites.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on a semiotic analysis of two smart tourism-related sites (destinosinteligentes.es and smarttourismcapital.eu), the research interprets the brand-related visual and verbal signs.

Findings – The findings highlight how brand elements embedded in websites communicate a brand identity and facilitate particular interpretations of smart tourism. Both brands use similar signs to promote a techorian vision of smart destinations but employ different strategies to motivate stakeholder buy-in.

Research limitations/implications – Smart tourism is currently largely embedded in overall smart city initiatives and finding tourism-specific examples online is difficult. However, the two selected websites reflect the brands of multiple destinations and permit a detailed analysis of meaning making. Future research can focus on how brand-related signs are perceived by different stakeholders.

Practical implications – Identifying the strategies and shortcomings of current smart tourism brands informs future smart tourism branding efforts and effective communication with smart tourism stakeholders.

Originality/value – Semiotics is a relevant but underutilized method to understand how smart tourism initiatives conceptualize “smartness.”

Keywords Online branding, Brand identity

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Smart tourism as a means to competitively position destinations (Boes et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2016) has received extensive academic and industry attention (Johnson and Samakovlis, 2019). It is especially relevant for city destinations, which often offer very similar tourism experiences and, at the same time, increasingly struggle with the negative consequences of having to accommodate growing tourist flows in confined urban spaces (Postma and Schmuecker, 2017). It also builds on overall smart city developments in critical ways, taking advantage of mobility, innovation, sustainability, data availability and technology infrastructure investments to support enhanced tourism experiences (Gretzel et al., 2018). On the flip side, smart tourism can serve as a testbed for smart city initiatives, allowing for the roll-out of technological or social innovations on a smaller scale (e.g. in tourist precincts or selected hotels). As a consequence, most smart tourism development efforts have focused on urban destinations and are intricately linked to achieving smart city development goals (Gretzel, 2018).

Smart tourism development is resource intensive and requires the mobilization of a diverse array of stakeholders (Presenza et al., 2014). In contrast to destination marketing, which mostly aims at promoting the tourism experiences supplied by individual tourism providers and often only represents member organizations, smart destinations require more hands-on governance and management of the actual destination offerings. For a smart tourism ecosystem
(Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015) to survive and thrive, the right living conditions need to be present. Shafiee et al. (2019) refer to this process as establishing the intervening and context conditions that enable concrete smart tourism development actions. Most smart destinations are at the beginning stages of creating the foundations for smart tourism development, even in cities like Seoul, where smart tourism has received attention and support for many years (Gretzel et al., 2018).

It is not surprising that, like the smart city literature (Yigitcanlar et al., 2018), the smart tourism literature has mostly focused on aspects of technology and governance (Johnson and Samakovlis, 2019). However, convincing a myriad of stakeholders far beyond the typical tourism realm and the typical sphere of influence of a destination marketing organization (DMO) requires strategic communication aimed at educating, explaining and motivating the new and rather complex notion of smart tourism. If and how smart destinations achieve this has so far not been addressed in the literature, although Della Corte et al. (2017) stress the intricate link between smart tourism development, governance and destination marketing. Brands play an important role in summarizing multifaceted concepts and in provoking desired associations; they also facilitate the positioning of a destination within a particular competitive space (Pike et al., 2018). Understanding current smart tourism development practice therefore has to include an understanding of the branding strategies of smart destinations.

To address the gap in existing smart tourism literature, this paper explores how branding strategies have been implemented online to communicate relevant values, benefits and attributes of smart tourism and to establish and competitively position smart destination brands. To do this, the research employs a semiotic analysis of existing smart tourism brands. The objects analyzed are two smart tourism websites (destinosinteligentes.es and smarttourismcapital.eu). The analysis includes the exploration of visual and verbal signs which represent the icons, indexes and symbols used to support the meaning making that leads to brand identity creation.

By exploring the meaning-making processes, the research discovers the signs that culturally illustrate, indicate and symbolize smart destination branding and reveals focus areas and current shortcomings in the conceptualization and communication of the value of smart destinations. As such, it informs the smart tourism literature by highlighting existing understandings of smart destinations and contributes to online branding research by illustrating the embeddedness of branding elements in hypermedia communication spaces. There are also few studies which apply semiotics to the purpose of understanding destination, city or place brands. Thus, the research aims at motivating further exploration regarding the confluence of smartness and branding in future semiotic studies.

To achieve this, the paper first reviews the literature on smart cities, smart tourism and specifically smart destinations. It then introduces important concepts found in the general branding literature as well as the specific place branding and emerging smart city branding literatures before discussing the distinct nature of websites as brand communication channels. The methodology section elaborates on the semiotic approach applied in this research and explains the data collection and analysis steps. The finding section presents the two cases while the discussion section compares and contrasts them. The conclusion section summarizes the findings and highlights implications of the research while also acknowledging its limitations and suggesting directions for future research.

**Literature review**

**Smart cities, smart tourism and smart destinations**

The smart city is essentially a vision of the city of the future (Angelidou, 2015). The concept of the smart city promises the potential for significant urban change by realizing the city’s technological potential through a more efficient use and better organization of urban systems (Wiig, 2016). Many studies on smart cities have emphasized the multidimensional and interdisciplinary scope of this concept and practice (Yigitcanlar et al., 2018; Mendonça et al., 2016). Giffinger et al. (2007) identified six dimensions to define smart cities: smart economy (competitiveness through innovation and entrepreneurship), smart people (development of social and human capital), smart governance
(participatory decision-making and transparency), smart mobility (accessibility), smart environment (sustainable resource management and environmental protection) and smart life (quality of life and touristic attractivity). In a recent review of smart city literature, Yigitcanlar et al. (2018) point out that the technology and infrastructure aspects of smart cities remain central to most studies on this theme. Wiig (2016) suggests that such literature reflects the technocratic smart city policy discourse adopted in practice, positioning smart city development efforts within a post-industrial, entrepreneurial, neoliberal governance framework. From this perspective, the “smart city” label allows cities to attain economic prominence and attract enterprises and investors.

Smart tourism emerged from the smart city idea, with smart destinations representing special cases of smart cities (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014) that, in addition to improving the quality of life of their residents, pay special attention to offering enhanced experiences to tourists (Romão et al., 2018; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015). Femenia-Serra et al. (2019) argue that smart destinations use technology to fundamentally change the relationships tourists have with the destination.

Others have stressed efforts at the smart destination level to encourage networking, knowledge transfer and innovation among a variety of stakeholders (Del Chiappa and Baggio, 2015; Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015) and have highlighted that smart destinations implement new models of governance to ensure sustainability and destination resilience (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2019; Gretzel and Scarpino Johns, 2018). Gretzel (2018) reviews the pillars of smart tourism and finds that effective use of advanced technology, mobility/accessibility, sustainability and knowledge development/innovation are recurring themes in the literature. However, recent papers stress that smart tourism overall remains a rather elusive concept (e.g. Molinillo et al., 2019).

There is certainly agreement on smart tourism initiatives giving destinations and their DMOs a competitive edge in an increasingly dynamic tourism market (Jovicic, 2019; Cimbaljević et al., 2018). Koo et al. (2016) argue that smart destination competitiveness emerges from the implementation of smart technologies and intelligent systems that support resource stewardship, effective marketing, efficient organization and superior service. Yet the research by Molinillo et al. (2019) indicates that smart destinations are currently not capitalizing on the opportunities in terms of establishing and communicating strong brands. Valdez et al. (2018) emphasize that effective branding can benefit smart cities/destinations even more than the actual smart development investments because smart city narratives can reinforce existing city brands and mobilize actors toward development. Thus, smart destination branding should be a central concern for smart tourism research and practice.

**Branding principles**

A brand is an intangible asset which produces distinctive images and associations in the minds of stakeholders, resulting in economic benefits and value (ISO, 2019). Branding activities include the creation of names, taglines, logos, typographies, symbols, packaging and web designs, to identify goods, services or entities (ISO, 2019). The visible elements together constitute the brand identity, while brand positioning refers to the key brand associations a brand wants to occupy in the mind of the target audience (Keller and Lehmann, 2006).

Logos play an especially important role in branding as a visual cue (Kim and Lim, 2019). They can be typographical, figurative, abstract or a combination of these and their design elements (typeface, shape, color) and design dimensions (e.g. complexity, cohesiveness, balance) can significantly influence target audience responses (Kim and Lim, 2019). Similarly, slogans or taglines have been widely adopted as efficient means to build brand equity (Supphellen and Nygaard, 2002). However, Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009) and others (e.g. Morrison, 2013) warn that branding needs to go beyond the logo or slogan and include comprehensive strategies to create or manage expectations in a target audience.

Brands are rich connotative symbols whose implicit rather than literal meanings often provide the greatest value (Danesi, 2006). Therefore, managing brand equity demands first and foremost managing brand meanings or semiotics (Oswald, 2012). For these reasons, Oswald argues that applied semiotics can contribute to the planning and achievement of strategic branding and
marketing objectives in critical ways. Similarly, Wang and Zhang (2019) argue that the deployment of semiotic resources in branding strategies, especially in the context of city brands, is an important but under-researched area.

**Place and smart city branding**

The classic brand positioning statement is simple: a brand is addressed to a target audience, considering a specific set of competitors and promising key benefits supported by reasons to believe (Kapferer, 2012). Similarly, place branding is based on the assumption that the associations a place evokes in the mind of a target audience can be strategically manipulated (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Places, and specifically cities, can benefit in important ways from implementing coherent branding strategies to manage their reputation and image (Dinnie, 2011).

Ooi (2011) explains that city brands selectively frame and exclusively draw attention to positive images. Places use branding to establish and communicate what they believe to be their distinctive and definitive characteristics (Sevin, 2014), although Ooi (2011) points out that this leads to a paradox of cities portraying themselves all as “equally special” (p. 57). Additionally, Kladou et al. (2017) remind us that places – from countries to cities – have a complex nature; consequently, place branding engages a multiplicity of stakeholders, audiences, and place creators. Zenker and Braun (2017) highlight that audiences can associate different images, feelings and experiences with the place, resulting in diverse perceptions. As a result, place branding challenges are complex and place branding is inherently political.

This complexity is also recognized in the tourism literature, where place branding concepts have been extensively studied in relation to destinations (Almeyda-Ibáñez and George, 2017; Morgan et al., 2007; Blain et al., 2005; Pike, 2005). The complexity has increased drastically in recent years with the addition of digital communication spaces in which it is even more difficult to control destination brands (Gretzel, 2006), and which demand new interaction paradigms (Molinillo et al., 2019) as well as new monitoring tools (Micera and Crispino, 2017). The role of specific brand elements like destination slogans in these networked digital environments has been questioned by some (Munar, 2011). Surprisingly, the extensive literature on destination branding focuses almost exclusively on consumer-facing brands (both visitors and residents) and neglects the importance of business-to-business (B2B) brands; only the necessity to obtain “buy-in” from tourism industry stakeholders is addressed (Morrison, 2013).

There is also an emerging literature on branding in the smart city context. Kolotouchkina and Seisdedos (2018), for instance, present case studies of new smart cities that used branding to distinguish themselves as technology-led business innovation ecosystems for highly skilled workers. However, there are also critical voices that question whether cities can live up to their smart city brand promises and speak of branding hoaxes and empty rhetoric (Yigitcanlar and Lee, 2014; Wiig, 2016). Similarly, Söderström et al. (2014) argue that smart city brands function as framing devices and feed into the overall technology-driven smart city discourse, promoting what Vanolo (2014) calls “smartmentality.” In contrast, smart destination branding literature is basically non-existent. Only Molinillo et al.’s (2019) study on social media engagement strategies of smart destinations and Basbeth et al.’s (2018) conference paper on the intersection of smart city and smart destination branding could be identified.

**Websites as brand communication channels**

Semprini (2010) emphasizes that the semiotic power of a brand is related to the ability of the brand to build and disseminate meanings structured in narratives such as in advertising campaigns, as well as other branding expressions. Websites have become central means of brand expression, especially for destination brands (Költringer and Dickinger, 2015). Websites are communicative spaces that allow marketers to create and distribute a brand identity using verbal and nonverbal signs (Nöth, 2006).

Websites are hypermedia (a combination of navigable hypertext and multimedia) (Santaella, 2012). Hypermedia constitute a moving and fluid language, informed by “liquid architectures” (Santaella, 2012) that support new forms of marketing (Hoffman and Novak, 1996).
The non-linearity of the hypertext offers endless possibilities of connections through searches, discoveries and reader choices. According to Marcotte (2010), websites were originally developed following the principles established for printed pages, although webpages are very different media. Yet, especially in tourism, websites are still often based on direct translations of a marketing brochure, a phenomenon coined “brochureware” site.

Royo (2008) explains that websites involve digital signage and language codes (visual and sequential) to help website users navigate the informational space. Digital signage brings together knowledge from three fields of design: usability design (human–machine interaction), information design (information organization) and traditional signage (facilitation of flows and spatial navigation). Language codes help users interact with design objects in cyberspace. Royo (2008) clarifies that language codes can be visual – such as alphabetic (typography) and non-alphabetic writing (icons and schemes) or still images (illustrations and photographs); while sequential codes are characterized by moving images, and other hypertext features. Together with the website contents, these digital signage and language codes constitute the online representation of a brand and influence the ability of the brand elements to communicate the desired associations and trigger engagement and meaning creation.

Research methodology

This research employed applied semiotics to reveal how meaning is created and communicated through branding elements on smart destination websites. Semiotics is the science that studies signs embedded in human, nature and machine communication. It investigates meanings of signs within the culture we live in, as well as the languages and communication processes, through which we interact (Nöth and Santaella, 2017). Importantly, it not only analyzes the signs as such but also their functions and effects.

Of the two branches of semiotics, this study relies on Peircean semiotics (Peirce and Welby, 1977), which is more applicable to visual communication elements like brand logos (Skaggs, 2017). Central to Peircean theory are the three universal categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness (Santaella, 2007). Firstness involves immediate impressions and sensations, secondness concerns reactions that occur before articulated thought but are subsequent to spontaneous feelings. Thirdness pertains to cognitive elaboration, to the translation of one thought into another in a growing and continuous way (Santaella, 2007).

Following Peircean theory, Nöth (2008) explains that the definition of the sign is based on a triadic relationship involving: a sign or representamen (meaning or representation which stands for something else, its object); an object (material or imaginary thing which determines the sign); and an interpretant (another sign produced in the mind of an interpreter, resulting in the process of interpretation). Considering the relationship between the sign and its object, the sign can be an icon, an index or a symbol. The icon relates to firstness because it has similar qualities or relational matches with its object. The icon is generally a copy with similar qualities (painted pictures) or relational correspondences to its object (maps, diagrams). The index supports secondness because it has physical connections with its object. As an example, footprints on the ground indicate the passage of someone through a specific place. The index works as an organic pair to its object: footprint-person, smoke-fire and echo-voice. The symbol pertains to thirdness because it presents arbitrary connections with its object. Thus, its interpretation depends on socio-cultural conventions such as rules, laws, beliefs, words and cultural habits that must be learned (Nöth, 2008).

Peircean semiotics investigates the action of signs (semiosis), which refers to how different types of phenomena – that produce meanings – are constituted. Semiosis is any process or activity that involves the production of meaning, through a continuous interpretation of signs in nature and culture (Santaella, 2007). As a sub-category, applied semiotics explores the communicative potential of consumption and marketing signs, such as advertising messages and brand elements (logos, packaging, concepts, images, etc.) (Nöth, 2006). When analyzing a brand-related sign (logo, label, packaging) through a semiotic perspective, the investigation takes into account each component as well as their linkages, exploring several signifying layers.
that compose the object. As Niemeyer (2010) observes, design communicates qualities and features but also communicates aesthetic, symbolic and cultural values. These theoretical concepts critically informed the analysis and interpretation of results.

**Data collection and analysis**

Extensive web searches for “smart tourism” and “smart destination” revealed very little online material in terms of branded communications that pertained to destinations rather than events, news articles or tour operator products. The general search was complemented by detailed searches on the websites of city destinations that had been labeled “smart” in the tourism literature (Amsterdam, Vienna, Seoul, Helsinki, etc.) but most of them linked their efforts to general smart city developments rather than creating a specific smart destination brand (as illustrated by www.wien.info/en/vienna-for/smart-city-vienna). In the end, only two websites were identified that communicated distinct smart destination brands to an external audience via a public website: www.destinosinteligentes.es/; and https://smarttourismcapital.eu/. They therefore formed the basis of the analysis. Both websites contained a variety of brand elements (logos, videos, images, infographics, slogans, text-based descriptions and links to additional resources), and as such provided a rich data source for exploring smart destination brands.

Skaggs (2017) explains that semiotic analysis requires the splitting of the continuous flow of experience into discrete frames, so-called semiotic moments. The semiotic moments of the analysis presented in this paper refer to the homepages of the two websites as they existed in July 2019 and as captured through screenshots. The semiotic analysis followed the guidelines described by Santaella (2004), which explore three points of view in the interpretative process: qualitative-iconic, singular-indicative and conventional-symbolic.

1. The qualitative-iconic point of view investigates qualitative aspects of the sign, related to visible qualities and first impressions that the sign presents and evokes to the readers. These aspects involve colors, lines, shapes, textures, lights, volumes, dimensions, materiality, formal compositions and design aspects. But signs also suggest abstract qualities – such as modernity, liveliness, sophistication, simplicity, among others – because they stimulate free spontaneous associations of ideas based on iconic, comparative or similar relationships.

2. The singular-indicative point of view investigates the sign as something which exists and belongs to a specific spatial-temporal context. For example, traces of identity and origin, as well as practical functions that the sign performs during its use, considering the context of interactions with its users.

3. Finally, the conventional-symbolic point of view investigates aesthetic preferences and cultural horizons connected with the sign. At this stage, the symbolic power of the sign, its messages and images are explored to understand how the cultural status of the brand has been built. To do so, the socio-cultural values, symbols, myths and archetypes associated with the sign, as well as the understanding of the meanings transferred by the sign to its target audience are identified. Also, how the message is contributing to the consolidation of the brand identity and product personality and what type of psychographic profile the message is focusing on.

The analysis was conducted by both members of the research team and differences in interpretation were resolved through extensive discussions. Interpretations were informed by existing literature in the areas of design (with a focus on website design) (e.g. Lupton, 2014; Dabner et al., 2014), branding and smart development. Both researchers have expertise in branding and smart development, and one is a design expert.

**Findings**

Brand identity is constructed via different visual and verbal design elements (brand name, logo, typography, color palette, supporting graphics/images, tagline, sounds). In the context of branded websites, these are embedded within website design features such as headers and footers, navigation menus, backgrounds, navigation buttons, tables and forms and
supplemented with hypermedia contents like static or moving images, sounds and videos (Dabner et al., 2014). The semiotic analysis involved both brand-specific and website-related design elements for each of the two branded smart tourism websites. The results are presented for each website separately and then discussed in terms of similarities and differences.

Semiotic analysis of the website “destinosinteligentes.es”

Brand elements. Focusing on the brand elements first, the brand name presented on the website is the direct Spanish translation of “smart tourism destination.” It is important to note that this is a rather generic name that subsumes different kinds of destinations (city, region, island, country, mature or emerging, urban or rural, etc.) beyond specific political borders but limits the brand linguistically to destinations where Spanish is spoken. It also signifies that this is not a consumer-facing brand but rather a B2B brand for local stakeholders, otherwise one would assume different translations to be available. In addition, the brand can be easily adopted by destinations alongside their current brands.

The logo consists of a colorful visual sign and the brand name in black font (Figure 1(a)). Importantly, the name is broken up into two lines, with the signifier “smart” appearing in the second line. To further stress the hierarchy, the words for tourism destination are presented in bold font, whereas “smart” appears in a lighter font. As such, the logo suggests that these places are tourism destinations first and smart destinations second. In addition, the logo typeface is clean, sans serif and very legible.

The visual icon next to the text Destino Turístico Inteligente communicates movement and vivacity. The geometric shape is positioned on the left of the verbal element, in a slightly inclined way. It is similar to a triangular shape, but it has folded vertices, which convey the sensation of movement, thus reinforcing the shape inclination. This underlines the notion of smart destinations being progressive and dynamic.

The shape is built with layers of different semitransparent colors, which appear to be intertwined. The intertwined layers produce the illusion of depth in a flat object. The colors are vivid and can be associated with dynamism and creativity. The main colors of the brand are sky blue, yellow, green and magenta, but there are intersections at some points of the shape where the mixed colors become royal blue and red. Together, the colored elements of the symbol produce the

Figure 1 Destino Turístico inteligente logo

(a) Brand name and logo

(b) Four dimensions: Technology, Sustainability, Innovation and Accessibility
visual effect of interlaced layers, that might be metaphorically associated with the complexity of the urban fabric.

Furthermore, the geometric form expresses an abstract symbolic facet. As Dabner et al. (2014) clarify, an abstraction is an aesthetic concept which is refined to the minimum form and colors to express a complex idea in a clean and balanced way. Farther down on the website, the logo symbol is actually unpacked (Figure 1(b) and its complex conceptual elements are revealed: yellow stands for technology, green represents sustainability, magenta symbolizes innovation, and blue represents accessibility. These four dimensions correspond to generally accepted pillars of smart tourism (Gretzel, 2018).

The semitransparent colors in the logo suggest that it was built especially for digital media applications. Consequently, the Destino Turístico Inteligente logo indicates that the brand reflects post-digital revolution branding practices (Lupton, 2014), as it is targeted toward the ubiquitous and multiscreen communication environment. The logo overall can be described as clean and elegant. This characteristic fits flat web design creative trends (Lupton, 2014) and reinforces that it belongs to this specific time and context. Interestingly, there is no tagline associated with the brand name and logo.

The project description text was used to derive additional information about the brand. Table I summarizes the target audience, brand positioning, brand benefits and brand promises. Based on the information, it can be argued that the smart tourism brand currently stands for a community of practice but might ultimately become a quality seal similar to those used by sustainable tourism certification programs. This is further supported by descriptions of the development of a European Union norm for smart destinations.

**Website design elements.** Rather than emphasizing the navigation menu, the focus of attention on the homepage is immediately drawn to the visual representation in the center of the page, which is further supported by the otherwise white background that fills most of the space (Figure 2). It shows a panoramic view of a destination, mimicking the panoramic lookouts, postcards and 360° photos that are common in tourism. Navigation arrows on the left and right of the graphic allow one to move through the image in an endless loop to explore the smart destination. When moving through, smart tourism-related keywords/slogans appear on top in bold font: “cutting-edge technology”; “sustainable management”; “accessible for all”; “visitor integration”; “quality of life for residents”; and “innovative region.”

The image conveys feelings of clarity, modernity and simplicity because it has fine and delicate lines in the brand colors yellow, green, magenta and blue. There is no high color contrast. Shapes appear discretely against the white background. Most lines are straight. There is no depth of focus; in this image, everything looks flat because it is integrated on the same plane. The design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Brand attributes and benefits of the Destino Turístico Inteligente brand</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand</strong></td>
<td><strong>Destino Turístico Inteligente</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>SEGITTUR (State Mercantile Society for the Management of Innovation and Tourism Technologies) under the Spanish Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Tourism destinations and city governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand positioning</td>
<td>A pioneer project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and reasons to believe</td>
<td>Revaluation of the destination by adding innovation and technology to its branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in tourism competitiveness, profitability, and creation of new resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement in marketing activities and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fostering of sustainable development including environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation claims and value added</td>
<td>Better experience for visitors and better quality of life for residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive aspects of the tourism strategy benefit the destination economy as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synergy and knowledge transfer among members, public and private partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal perspective: exchange of experience and best practice, guidance during the application of the methodology; access to financing, knowledge, events and technology providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External perspective: national and international visibility</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
does not contemplate reliefs or particularities of the urban fabric, as it is composed of simple features and figures. Again, the colors of the graphic correspond to the four pillars of smart tourism. Technology-related aspects like wi-fi networks, security cameras and databases appear in yellow; green is applied to icons related to sustainability (recycling, wind energy, waste management), magenta appears in the representations of devices and apps associated with innovative tourist experiences. Finally, blue is used for all accessibility aspects. In addition, light and dark grey graphic details integrate the visual composition and small yellow, green, magenta and blue visual representations add at least some life to the portrayed landscape in the form of clouds, birds, airplanes, hot air balloons, trees, etc.

The graphic resembles an infographic. As Lapolli and Vanzin (2016) clarify, infographics are visual representations that organize data, present information and translate knowledge in didactic and structured ways. They are especially useful for complex concepts which often require the understanding of connections among abstract ideas. The graphic focuses on the functional aspects of smart destinations. It seeks to clarify how the many elements of a smart destination are interconnected, trying to make visible the invisible layers of smart destinations (Gretzel and Scarpino Johns, 2018). Therefore, the visual codes and aesthetic style used are borrowed from engineering blueprints and architecture drawings that reveal the inner working of engines, computer systems or buildings. Pictograms are used to communicate concepts such as wi-fi, social media, mobile devices and recycling, allowing the infographic to explain smart tourism in mostly visual form. For instance, tourists are depicted as schematic human figures with traditional cameras around their neck.

From the symbolic point of view, a paradox is observed. What makes cities worth living in and visiting are their variety of buildings, public spaces, restaurants, people, etc. Urban spaces are messy, crowded and sometimes even chaotic. Tourism is about play, fun and discovery. In the graphic, however, the streets have no curves, the buildings are colorless and the human figures are generic, lonely and faceless creatures that only appear as individuals and never in pairs or groups. There are no residents but there is a policeman next to a closed-circuit TV camera. Consequently, the impression of hygiene depicted in the graphic represents a specific technotopian vision (Kozinet, 2008) of a destination that does not necessarily correspond with the needs and wants of tourists. It very much stresses the functional/operational and technological aspects of smart tourism rather than emphasizing human inputs and experiences. The tourists are not the focus but appear as part of the landscape.

The website uses Google fonts, mostly in light blue, white, black and different shades of grey. Focus on the headers is achieved through vertical color bars to their left. The overall design of the
homepage is broken up into horizontal blocks of information that appear with either white, gray, light blue or black backgrounds and correspond largely to the very simple navigation menu that appears on top of the website. The main headers for each block dynamically move into the field of vision from the right, while main contents appear from the left or the bottom. After a brief description of the initiative behind the website in the first block after the infographic, the current member destinations are featured (Figure 3).

A total of 28 images corresponding to member destinations are presented in alphabetical order based on the destination name, symbolizing equality among the destinations. These images consist of a destination photo and a transparent, light blue colored bar with the name of the destination in white. When moving over the section, the blue bar expands over the photo and the destination name appears in the center of the image, together with a hyperlink symbol that allows users to click through to the destination-specific page. Most photos are related to urban or natural landscapes that appear very generic – without the destination name it would be impossible to recognize many of them.

The photos have very little touristic appeal and partly look like traditional postcard images. They also do not feature anything related to the four pillars of smart tourism. Consequently, indexicality is the purpose of these images. After all, each photograph refers to a specific smart destination. By clicking on each photograph, the user encounters new information, which opens sequentially and presents the measures implemented in the specific destination searched at that moment of interaction.

After a section with text- and image-based blocks that present industry news, a block with an embedded YouTube video appears that was used to launch the brand in 2015 (Figure 4(a)). Copying the design style of the infographic and partly suggesting that it zooms in on particular aspects of the infographic, the video presents smart tourism experiences underlined by uplifting music and a cheery male narrator.

While the video looks at smart destinations from a tourist’s point of view, describing the tourist journey before, during and after the trip, the location of the video and its didactic character suggest that it is aimed at further educating potential stakeholders. The final scene of the narrative (Figure 4(b)) shows four tourists with thought bubbles in the four colors that refer to the four dimensions of the smart destination brand. The video starts and ends with the prominent and

![Figure 3](Figure 3)

**Links to current member destinations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESTINOS</th>
<th>DESTINOS INTELIGENTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atenas</td>
<td>Arona</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avilés</td>
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<tr>
<td>Badajoz</td>
<td>Benidorm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carballeda</td>
<td>Canal de Castilla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castellófet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceuta (Melilla)</td>
<td>Donostia / San Sebastián</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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dynamic display of the logo (interestingly with the English term “Smart Destination”) and also displays the brand owner logo (SEGITTUR) at the very end. Thus, the message aims at convincing the network of stakeholders to participate in the initiative.

The video section is followed by two-color blocks that provide more information on how to join the initiative and how to get in contact. The bottom of the page provides the usual legal information but also a search box and links to social media. On a consumer-facing website one would expect these to appear on top. Finally, the SEGITTUR logo with its government seal also appears at the very bottom, lending the website its necessary credibility.

**Semiotic analysis of the website “smarttourismcapital.eu”**

*Brand elements.* The brand name “European Capital of Smart Tourism” is borrowed from the well-established “European Capital of Culture” designation. As such, it immediately creates associations with the European Union and with a special status that is officially awarded. The European Capital of Smart Tourism logo (Figure 5) is formed by three symbolic elements: a rectangle representing the European Union flag, a geometric shape and the textual element, which communicates the brand name.

On the left, the European Union flag corresponds to the most famous symbol of the European Community. It acts like an official seal, lending the brand credibility. At the center, the geometric shapes present a qualitative-iconic facet because it resembles the number or pound sign (#), frequently used in social media in the form of a hashtag to affiliate contents with certain topics. Consequently, the brand can be interpreted as belonging to the specific context of a digital and participatory culture. Rather than consisting of lines, it comprises four colored, intertwined rectangles (pinkish red, dark blue, turquoise green and yellow). Through combining the rectangles, it presents the idea of connecting different layers or categories of information. Like the woven yarn of a fabric, the graphic element communicates cohesiveness: a coherent whole made of important building blocks. The brand name is presented in black capitalized letters over two lines, with “European Capital” appearing on the first line and “of Smart Tourism” on the second, but with “Smart Tourism” being emphasized with bold font. Overall, the capitalized letters symbolize stability.
The brand tagline appears in the main body of the website and states “Smart gets you further.” Again, the verbal information available on the website was used to derive further information about strategic brand elements (Table II). The verbal brand element analysis reveals the signaling quality of the brand – it lends status. Also, it is clear that it cannot be used by just anyone – it has to be earned and is limited to specific city destinations. This creates an aura of exclusivity. When awarded, the brand allows the smart destination to visibly celebrate its achievements and position itself ahead of the pack of other smart destinations. It comes with the promise of being recognized as outstanding, along with a number of other benefits. Importantly, the website suggests that displaying the brand indicates to tourists that the city is the place to visit in that particular year.

Website design elements. At first glance, solid and intense colors stand out on the website of the European Capital of Smart Tourism brand. The four vivid colors of the brand logo appear in different graphic elements throughout the website, evoking exuberance. Looking at the top of the homepage (Figure 6), two pictures that balance each other and the four solid rectangle shapes connecting them call the website user’s attention. A white background is behind these signs. Thus, the visual composition evokes sensations of stability because it is well-organized.

On the left side of the homepage we see four people on a picture; specifically, two pairs of a man and a woman in close proximity. They look young, diverse, wealthy and are wearing colorful and casual clothes. One of the young men is wearing a camera around the neck, which marks him as a prototypical tourist. The couple in the background looks ahead. The couple in the foreground is using a tablet held by the man and their gazes are focused on the device. Their mouths are open, and their hands point, symbolizing a travel planning instance. On the right side of the homepage, there is a smartphone displaying a picture of a bridge – the iconic Charles Bridge in Prague. It is one of the most crowded and lively places in Europe; however, in the picture, the urban landscape is empty, conforming with established Instagram aesthetics for travel photos (Gretzel, 2017). Two male hands are holding the smartphone. The mobile device is portrayed as the protagonist in this visual narrative, the human is mostly invisible.

The first picture adds symbolic values to the brand because youth is culturally valued since it is associated with dynamism, energy, vitality, innovation, and beauty. Also, young people often represent heavy users of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in advertising imagery. In this sense, they might personify the ideal users for smart tourism considering the ubiquitous reliance on ICTs in smart tourism, thus reinforcing desired associations with the brand positioning.

The European Capital of Smart Tourism website design is organized along horizontal lines and uses color blocks to break up the page, however, the elements are not dynamic. The color blocks repeat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Brand attributes and benefits of the European Capital of Smart Tourism brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand</strong></td>
<td>European Capital of Smart Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>European Capital of Smart Tourism Secretariat under the European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>European cities with a population of over 100,000 or largest city in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Positioning</td>
<td>Tagline: “Smart gets you further”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and reasons to believe</td>
<td>Promote the rich tourism offer of European countries and increase citizens’ sentiment of sharing local tourism-related values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen tourism-generated innovative development in cities, their surroundings and their regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase the attractiveness of European cities that are awarded the title and strengthen economic growth and job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a framework for the exchange of best practices between cities participating in the contest and create opportunities for cooperation and new partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be recognized for outstanding achievements in smart tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be seen as a smart tourism pioneer and inspiration to other cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be the place to visit in 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Win a year of expert branding marketing and communications support, a sculpture for the city center and promotional actions from the European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking opportunities with other European cities, policy makers and industry leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the bright colors of the logo, with some white and grey blocks added. The capitalized letters of the logo are repeated in the navigation menu and throughout the text. The fonts used on the website are set to the default fonts and are programmed to respond to the specific device of the user. This underlines the digital context in which the branding happens but also indicates standardization as opposed to creativity. The fonts are sans serif, communicating simplicity and functionality. The font size is extremely small in some places and the texts are often not very legible because of a lack of color contrast (e.g. white font on yellow background and blue font on red background).

Importantly, the second color block of the website introduces four building blocks of smart tourism capitals, presented in the four colors that make up the logo: “Sustainability” (in turquoise green with a visual, abstract sign of a footprint); “Accessibility” (in yellow with a wheelchair pictogram); “Digitalisation” (in pinkish red with a microchip sign); and “Cultural Heritage & Creativity” (in dark blue with a somewhat ambiguous representation of a fingerprint). This block is followed by two further color blocks with brief official verbal statements.

Next, an embedded video appears on the site. It repeats many elements of the homepage, with the colored rectangles moving dynamically across quickly changing images of transportation modes, city landscapes, iconic attractions, young people and smartphones to the fast and loud beat of instrumental music (Figure 7(a)). The message of the video “Will your city be the next capital of smart tourism in Europe?” is an invitation for European cities to enroll in the competition. To this end, the copy uses a personal call, “your city”, motivating managers of European cities to participate. The video ends with the tagline (Figure 7(b)), the website address and the logo.
The same color block also presents the list of previous winners (Figure 8). The overall winners are presented first and the category winners second. The names are announced in neat boxes that include a generic city image and the city name in italic, all in capitalized font on top of brightly colored rectangles corresponding to the logo and smart tourism pillars. The boxes are perfectly aligned and resemble the index of destinations in a travel agency catalogue.

The list of destinations is followed by a similar but messy block of links to news articles. It lacks spaces between color blocks, resulting in difficulty to distinguish the individual news boxes from each other. Finally, the homepage presents three more color blocks: a statement of aims, a brief “Who we are” message, and a busy site index that stands in stark contrast to the simple navigation menu on top of the page. Below the last color blocks are barely visible representations of the Facebook and Twitter logos, suggesting that engaging the target audience via social media is not a main goal for the brand.

Discussion

The two brands exhibit striking similarities in their design choices but also a few significant differences in terms of their symbolic meanings. First, both brand logos and overall website
design concepts conform with what could be called “Google aesthetics” – bold, primary colors on white backgrounds. They clearly belong to the post-digital era, expressing complex brand concepts in a rational and aesthetically clean manner. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate that the color palettes of both brands are composed of essentially four tones located in similar positions on the color wheel. Vibrant colors such as those used by the two brands generally convey creativity, dynamism and innovation. The Destino Turístico Inteligente brand uses even more vibrant colors – right at the edge of the color wheel – than the European Capital of Smart Tourism brand.

Both brands signify progress through the design options selected as well as keywords and slogans used. The concept of “pioneer” appears on both websites, combined with innovation and being “ahead of the curve.” Both brands emphasize technology in their visuals and verbal descriptions, highlighting the tehtopian ideology of technology as progress (Kozinets, 2008).

Figure 9  Brand identity color palette for Destino Turístico Inteligente

![Figure 9 Brand identity color palette for Destino Turístico Inteligente](image)

Figure 10  Brand identity color palette for European Capital of Smart Tourism

![Figure 10 Brand identity color palette for European Capital of Smart Tourism](image)
As such, they communicate almost exclusively about what Boes et al. (2016) refer to has “hard smartness” factors, neglecting the human components of smart tourism development.

Both brand logos include combinations of text and geometric shapes, which communicates the idea of junctions among distinct layers. Both brands use four categories of layers or building blocks that reflect the pillars of smart tourism. However, they use slightly different labels and the color-coding does not match. Only sustainability is consistently labeled and colored across the two websites. This suggests that smart tourism concepts are not yet established and that smart tourism components are open to interpretation.

Both brands are B2B brands, which is reflected in their functional designs and their lack of visually compelling travel imagery. However, there are important differences in how they approach smart tourism development. The Destino Turístico Inteligente brand communicates about smart tourism development as a plan – the infographic presents a roadmap. Valdez et al. (2018) suggest that roadmaps are good for achieving quick, concrete results but do not encourage visionary thinking. Using the brand signifies a commitment to a suggested development process. The goal of the brand is to educate, and its design encourages forward movement. In contrast, the European Capital of Smart Tourism brand suggests that smart tourism is already being realized by some destinations. It motivates through rewarding smart destination achievements. Its design is static and stresses signs that communicate that the designation is official. For instance, the official flag representing the European Union is embedded in the logo and the brand name, while the official SEGITTUR logo only appears on the very bottom of the page.

The European Capital of Smart Tourism brand further signals exclusivity: only certain cities can apply and only the best are rewarded. The Destino Turístico Inteligente brand is inclusive – it encourages different kinds of destinations to join and promotes all of them equally. As such, the latter stresses collaboration, represents a network/community of practice, and sees smart tourism development as something that is achieved together. The former, however, gives visibility only to the best: the winners take it all. This is further illustrated by the navigation menu featuring a “best practice” tab, which suggests that rather than learning together, destinations should learn from the best.

Conclusion

Applying a semiotic analysis methodology allowed this research to identify and interpret the visual and verbal signs on two smart destination brand websites. The findings illustrate how brand elements and digital communication codes are used to express a technology-focused, progress-oriented smart tourism development agenda and motivate commitment and resource mobilization in targeted stakeholders. A variety of implications can be derived from the results and the following sections discuss them from theoretical, practical and future research perspectives.

Theoretical implications

The analyzed websites are symbolic representations of particular notions of smartness that are also reflected in existing smart tourism literature. By revealing their shortcomings in terms of their technology focus, the current study provides a critique of existing smart tourism research and suggests that the mobility, universal accessibility, creativity, innovation and sustainability pillars of smart tourism need to be more prominently explored in order to inform smart tourism development practice in critical ways. It also stresses definitional uncertainty as far as the concepts of smart tourism and smart destination are concerned that needs to be resolved from a theoretical point of view.

The findings present smart destination marketing in practice and hint at the need to educate and establish credibility for smart tourism initiatives. With most research focusing on development or governance issues, the smart destination marketing area is still a nascent field of inquiry that warrants more attention. With its current focus on B2B branding, smart destination marketing research can also critically inform the limited literature on B2B branding in tourism.
In addition, the research used the smart destination branding context to explore the intricate relationships between branding elements and hypermedia communication spaces. The analysis shows that branding is not only optimized for digital spaces but integrates design elements (especially aesthetics) that are native to these spaces (Lupton, 2014). As such, the study also contributes to emerging research on online branding in tourism (Scorrano et al., 2019).

Last but not least, the research contributes to the semiotics literature in tourism. Semiotic approaches have been recognized for their value (Echtner, 1999) but are still not widely used as an analytical lens. Further, by uncovering mimetic isomorphism in the two websites as far as smart tourism conceptualizations, logos and website design logics are concerned, the study also supports the combination of institutional theory and semiotics in future studies, as proposed by Arnold, Kozinets and Handelman (2001).

Practical implications
The research findings provide important insights regarding conceptualizations of smart destinations by smart development practitioners and influential governing bodies. The educational aspects of the websites clearly indicate that there is a need to clarify the elusive concept of smart tourism for practitioners. The research further highlights that industry and government discourse is firmly rooted in techtopian ideology and shaped by the rhetoric of powerful corporations (Söderström et al., 2014). As Wiig (2016) points out, such smart destination “rhetoric of intelligent, transformative digital change works much more to “sell” a city in the global economy than to actually address urban inequalities” (Wiig, 2016: p. 535). While the verbal signs hinted at residents and tourists, the visual signs (logos, videos, infographic) completely neglected residents and communicated a clean, idealized version of a destination with faceless, lonely tourists in the periphery. As such, smart destinations might run the risk of alienating residents and tourists alike and remain unable to address challenges such as overtourism and anti-tourism sentiment.

The study reveals that understanding the meaning-making potential of particular signs is important for smart destination developers and marketers. It illustrates the materiality of brand design (Manning, 2010) and the potential of brands to render “smartness” tangible for important target audiences. It underlines the importance of smart destination brands in lending visibility to smart tourism development efforts. However, it also identifies gaps in the smart destination brand identities and suggests that they do not sufficiently represent the interactive, playful, emotional and experiential nature of tourism. The fact that only two distinct smart destination brands could be identified further confirms that smart tourism development seems to be subordinate to broader smart city development and subsumed in general smart city brands. Consequently, the research highlights the need to develop specific smart tourism/smart destination brands that are separate from overall smart city brands and go beyond generic smart development concepts.

Limitations and implications for future research
Semiotics is the study of the particular and therefore does not require large samples. However, the sample of the two smart tourism brands is limited in that it only represents smart destination branding orchestrated on a supranational level and targeted at DMOs, city governments and investors. Future research might need to contact DMOs directly as B2B communication often happens through channels that are not publicly accessible. Further, taking into account the triadic relationship between sign, object and interpretant, the results presented are informed by a theoretical perspective. Future studies could focus on the identified signs but on different interpreters, such as tourists, residents or DMOs.

Overall, the research also calls for more critical research in the area of smart tourism that not only reveals but also challenges public discourse on smart destinations. Joss et al. (2019) suggest that public discourse surrounding smart cities indicates that they are facing critical junctures. Thus, it is important to add an informed academic voice to this discourse to provide alternative or shape existing pathways to smart development.
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Overtourism management competencies in Asian urban heritage areas

Walter Jamieson and Michelle Jamieson

Abstract

Purpose – Urban heritage areas are under significant pressure as a result of increasing populations and significant visitor growth. The growth in visitor numbers is of particular concern as this is leading to the phenomenon of overtourism. In Asia, although the issue of overtourism requires immediate attention in order to avoid the loss of tangible and intangible heritage, many of those responsible for managing urban heritage areas lack the skills and competencies to prevent it or mitigate its effects. The purpose of this paper is to present an exploratory competency framework for managing urban heritage areas sustainably, for thereby preventing and/or mitigating overtourism.

Design/methodology/approach – In developing this framework, the authors examined how the context needs to change in order to implement sustainable urban heritage management, and they identified the particular competencies and associated skills and knowledge that are required of the stakeholders responsible for urban heritage areas to manage, prevent and/or mitigate overtourism. This analysis was based on a series of case studies examining the planning and management of urban heritage areas in Asia.

Findings – It was found that meeting three key objectives was essential in improving the competencies of stakeholder heritage area planners and developers as it relates to overtourism: integrated team approach, a mindset change on the part of key stakeholders and a common vision guiding the development process.

Research limitations/implications – It was found that in order for urban heritage managers to sustainably manage the heritage under their responsibility and prevent and/or mitigate overtourism, a fundamental shift in mindset is required on the part of key stakeholders, moving away from a “silo” approach and towards an integrated approach to urban heritage management, in which the team leaders and management teams have an interdisciplinary set of competencies and are supported in the planning and management process by subject/discipline specialists. The authors found that the set of competencies that are required by heritage management teams lie at the intersection of the four key areas of policy and planning intervention in urban heritage areas, which are: community economic development, urban planning and design, urban heritage area planning, and tourism planning and management. The competencies can be categorized under three headings: interdisciplinary perspective, soft management competencies and technical competencies.

Originality/value – This paper was developed based on the authors’ experience in planning and tourism initiatives throughout Asia and on a long history of urban heritage tourism and planning work around the world. Most of the discussion focuses on how urban destinations can prevent and/or address the issues associated with overtourism by enhancing the competencies of the teams and practitioners who are responsible for managing urban heritage areas.

Keywords Tourism planning, Urban planning, Overtourism, Sustainable heritage management, Urban heritage areas

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Recently, in North America and Europe, numerous studies have examined planning and management approaches to dealing with the issues related to overtourism (Dobbs and Butler, 2019; Nikolov, 2019; Gillbanks, 2019). In the Asian context, however, less attention has been given to this topic, even in the planning and management of urban heritage areas that are highly frequented by tourists.
Many of the rapidly-growing cities of Asia are struggling to manage heritage areas sustainably, and when overtourism is added to the mix, the challenge of ensuring that tangible and intangible heritage are protected becomes yet more complex. It is clear that preventing and mitigating overtourism in such contexts requires action in several areas. This paper contends that one such area of action is to enhance the capacities of those responsible for the planning and management of urban heritage. Simply put, many of the challenges related to overtourism in urban heritage areas can be prevented and/or addressed by having more effective planning and management teams.

Enabling urban planning and management teams to manage urban heritage areas sustainably, and cope with the added pressure of overtourism, requires ensuring that the teams, and particularly the team leaders, have a particular mix of competencies, i.e. those competencies at the cross-section between four planning and management disciplines: community economic development, urban planning and design, urban heritage area planning and tourism planning and management. When those tasked with managing urban heritage destinations have these competencies, they can ensure that overtourism (overcapacity) is not reached, and that if overtourism (over capacity) is reached, it is mitigated or addressed. Accordingly, they can prevent and/or mitigate the damage to tangible and intangible heritage caused by overtourism.

This paper has four main sections:

1. key challenges faced today by the managers of Asian urban heritage areas;
2. the context required for urban heritage managers to be in a position to prevent and/or mitigate overtourism;
3. competencies required by urban heritage management teams; and
4. towards delivering the competency framework.

Key challenges faced by the managers of Asian urban heritage

As a result of rapid urbanization and industrialization, Asian urban areas are today experiencing a wide range of issues, including a lack of affordable and adequate housing, insufficient clean water, inadequate solid waste management, lack of finance for the delivery of services and infrastructure (including insufficient tax revenues), lack of access to education, inadequate safety and security measures and high corruption (UN Habitat, 2016). As well as these issues, many Asian urban areas today face the issue of overtourism, which is significantly contributing to the loss of local tangible and intangible heritage.

In dealing with these issues, urban heritage managers face numerous challenges. Many such challenges were documented by Jamieson and Engelhardt (2018), who worked with heritage and urban management professionals across Asia to develop 48 case studies. The key challenges identified through these case studies include:

- the diversity of urban heritage areas;
- lack of reliable data and poor data analytics;
- lack of recognition of the limits to growth;
- the complexity of urban areas; and
- multiple threats to heritage and the complexity of heritage conservation.

The diversity of urban heritage areas

There are many different types of urban heritage areas and each has particular characteristics. Managers of these areas cannot simply take a one-model-fits-all approach but must instead develop planning and management responses tailored to their particular urban heritage area – given its set of unique circumstances (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2009).

In tailoring their responses to their local areas, the dimensions that urban heritage managers need to consider include: the level and type of development pressures on the urban heritage area...
(i.e. while some areas are experiencing significant pressures both from overall urban development and from tourism, others may face a decline in the local population but an increase in tourists, etc.); the rate of population growth and the local limits on spatial growth; resident population demographics; the nature and mix of the land-uses and economic activity; whether there is seasonal vs year-round tourism activity; the nature of visitor demographics and characteristics; the nature and quality of tourism governance; and the level of acceptance of and readiness for tourism of the residents.

Lack of reliable data and poor data analytics

In order for urban heritage managers to adequately consider all of the above-listed dimensions, they need information and data about each of them. A lack of reliable data has been a heated topic of discussion in the fields of urban heritage management and tourism management for more than two decades. What does exist are anecdotal accounts based on the experiences of public and private sector actors involved in the conservation of urban heritage areas. But these are inadequate for ensuring that responses to the issues are effective and that heritage is protected. Without reliable data, it is not surprising that the responses to the issues fail to achieve their objectives. With regard to tourism, the lack of data to support decision making often means that the hoped-for benefits of tourism are often not achieved and that, instead, tourism results in unintended negative consequences for local residents and the environment, as in cases of overtourism.

The lack of reliable data not only often results in negative impacts, it also impedes the ability of urban heritage managers to evaluate the benefits of their strategies. In measuring the success of tourism strategies, for example, most destinations lack data on the impact of tourism on the residents of an area and how they are better off after tourism, so they simply measure the success of tourism by the number of visitor arrivals (usually international visitors). A higher number of tourists is assumed to mean a higher amount of visitor spending in the area, and this is assumed to benefit everyone in the local community equally. However, without data to show whether or not visitors actually spend money in the area and without data on who benefits from this spending (if there is any spending), it is not possible to assess whether or not high visitor numbers are beneficial to the area.

Researchers have found that local communities often do not often benefit from tourism, and in some cases, their quality of life is diminished by tourism, especially when tourist numbers are very high and overtourism occurs. It is essential, therefore, to accurately measure both the positive and negative economic impacts of tourism, with an emphasis on evaluating the real costs of tourism to residents and other stakeholders in urban heritage areas. This analysis is also important when visitor numbers are restricted, as this can result in reduced income for residents.

The importance of adequate data can also be illustrated with the example of tourism dispersal. One of the main policy approaches being advocated to deal with overtourism is to disperse tourists to areas that are less visited. For dispersal to be successful there is an assumption that visitors will willingly accept going to other destinations. This may be true for certain types of urban areas, but very often historic urban areas are unique and contain tangible and intangible heritage that cultural tourists and others are seeking. Thus, while dispersal may work for a small number of visitors, it will not necessarily lessen the demand by visitors for unique urban heritage areas. In addition, while dispersal may reduce pressure on a specific urban heritage site, there may be negative impacts on the locations where the dispersed activity will subsequently take place. Without adequate data on how tourists to a particular site feel about potentially being dispersed elsewhere and what the impacts of a dispersal policy would be on the site tourists are dispersed to, there is a high chance that the dispersal strategy will not only be unsuccessful but will also have adverse consequences for the site tourists are dispersed to.

Given these factors, the ability to generate multifaceted data and analyse it for planning, management and policy is an essential element in ensuring the effective management of urban heritage areas. Therefore, all urban heritage management teams should have competencies in this area. Urban heritage areas that can draw on solid data sources will be able to tailor their responses to issues more effectively and develop tourism strategies that benefit the local community and will have a higher likelihood of avoiding the negative impacts of overtourism.
Lack of recognition of the limits to growth

Although today there is widespread recognition of the socio-cultural and environmental limits to development and growth, as reflected in the United Nations (2015) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the awareness of these limits is not reflected in many of today’s heritage area planning and management processes in Asian urban heritage areas.

In the tourism sector, especially, many continue to argue that good management and design will allow urban heritage areas to continually accept larger and larger numbers of tourists. The reality is, however, that urban heritage areas, and especially particular dimensions of those areas, have capacities beyond which the resource and the visitor experience are negatively impacted. In some instances, this capacity is related to space: only so many people can fit into any one place safely. In other instances, this capacity is related to environmental resources: there is only so much water, for example, available in a particular place at a particular time of year. In yet other instances, this capacity is related to the impacts of tourist numbers on residents. Rarely do urban heritage managers ever consider whether the community is ready for tourism and what level of tourism that the residents desire (i.e. decisions are not based on reliable data concerning the potential social, environmental and economic impacts of tourism on the community and reliable data about the site’s carrying capacity). Urban heritage planners and managers often do not consider resident’s perceptions at all, or they assume that these perceptions will be positive (especially if there are potential economic benefits). However, residents’ perceptions of tourism can, and do, change over time. While residents may be accepting of tourism at certain numbers of visitors, once these numbers are exceeded residents become increasingly negatively disposed in their perceptions of tourism, due to the negative impacts of tourism on their communities (Postma and Schmuecker, 2017).

Given that there are indeed limits to development and growth, it is important that urban heritage management teams are aware of these limits and have the competencies to determine the carrying capacities of the heritage sites in their areas. An ability to measure the carrying capacity of these sites will enable them to define appropriate visitor levels, and thereby safeguard the sites.

The complexity of urban areas

It is widely recognized that urban heritage areas are complex systems with multiple stakeholders, who often have opposing visions and goals. Moreover, as discussed in Jamieson and Engelhardt (2018), many cities have large informal sectors and multiple unregulated dimensions, which are often the product of a series of individual decisions and cannot be easily guided by urban management policies and programmes. Furthermore, in many Asian cities, large property owners and property development interests have significant influence and power, and control much of what can be built and conserved in these cities. In such a context, effective urban heritage management requires recognizing the influence each of the various stakeholders has on the way local development proceeds and identifying how these stakeholders impact on the heritage sites that the urban heritage managers are responsible for. Although some argue that the significant obstacles presented by urban property interests and public-sector actors must be dealt with before beginning to think about improving the way management teams manage urban heritage, it can be argued that waiting for structural and regulatory changes – which may never occur or will take some time to be put into place – is not acceptable, given the current high rate of loss of urban heritage. In the context of tourism, it is important to recognize that every stakeholder in urban heritage areas can have a significant influence on the nature of tourism development (Crawford, 2016). The challenge is to begin developing equitable and effective governance systems that take into account the complexity of urban heritage areas.

Multiple threats to heritage and the complexity of heritage conservation

Urban heritage areas face threats from multiple sources; accordingly, both tangible and intangible heritage resources are being lost at an ever-increasing rate. Of particular concern is the loss of intangible heritage, which is an essential and irreplaceable element of heritage areas. As well as the influence of powerful property owners discussed above, other factors
contributing to the loss of heritage include the lack of legislative and regulatory mechanisms and lack of knowledge of heritage values among urban heritage management teams. Moreover, in addressing the issues, urban heritage managers often are not aware of examples of good practice on how to conserve heritage, for example through the sensitive adaptive reuse of heritage properties (as opposed to razing them and building new buildings) (ICOMOS, 1994). UNESCO has provided models of good practice in Asia, most notably through the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation (UNESCO, na). Teams responsible for managing urban heritage need to become aware of both the threats to heritage and the various innovative ways to safeguard heritage.

The context required for urban heritage managers to be in a position to prevent and/or mitigate overtourism

In Asia, as in many other places, much of the urban heritage planning and management process occurs within “silos” where unidisciplinary approaches are taken to addressing the issues and overcoming challenges. This approach is not systemic in terms of understanding the problems and identifying solutions (Gleeson, 2013). Under the “silo” approach, departments (and the units within them) work independently and do not cooperate with each other. Accordingly, departments can often work at cross-purposes or work in the same areas but in parallel, albeit towards a common goal. This occurs because there is a lack of communication and understanding among the various teams regarding the activities and concerns of other departments.

A change in mindset is required, moving from the “narrow to the broad” (Epstein, 2019, p. 109). The shift should be towards a “whole of government” approach, which eliminates bureaucratic silos and encourages integrated approaches. The municipal government of Barcelona is widely cited as having a “whole of government approach” to urban heritage management (Goodwin, 2016).

Under the “whole of government” approach, the various departments and units work together and follow an integrated and multidisciplinary process. This is more effective than a “silo” approach because thinking in a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary way allows for strategies that predict and take into account planned and unplanned consequences across a range of disciplinary concerns.

In most Asian urban heritage areas, bringing about this mindset change will be a difficult undertaking that will require a willingness to look at different ways of organizing teams and bureaucracies, and enable organizations and individuals to develop skills in leadership, teamwork, problem solving and creative thinking (Jamieson and Engelhardt, 2018).

Sceptics often argue that bureaucracies can never respond in a positive way to change, but as Landry and Caust (2017) explain, the lack of responsiveness may not be due to the nature of bureaucracies themselves but rather a result of the way that they are managed. They call for “creative bureaucracies” and argue that it is necessary to create bureaucracies a positive, respectful atmosphere, and an ethos of sharing and cooperation. This is a topic unto itself but is indicative of the kind of changes that must occur in dealing with many of the issues being experienced in Asian urban heritage areas, including overtourism (Landry and Caust, 2017).

Since the late 1960s, there have been increasing calls for multidisciplinary approaches and, to a lesser extent, interdisciplinary approaches and transdisciplinary approaches to defining and resolving urban issues. While some interdisciplinary teams have been established to plan and manage urban areas, these are rare. The lack of interdisciplinary teams stems partly from the lack of interdisciplinary studies at university. Very few universities have successfully created interdisciplinary planning and management faculties, and those studying urban planning and management are rarely exposed to the concerns of disciplines such as architecture, heritage conservation and tourism. Urban planning and management graduates therefore often do not possess the necessary interdisciplinary knowledge to overcome obstacles and address urban heritage management issues in a comprehensive and holistic way.
This issue is not restricted to the urban planning and management discipline. Other disciplines are taught the same way. Rarely are tourism students exposed to urban planning and management matters, or even to tourism planning and management concerns. Likewise, architects and urban designers are rarely exposed to the issues relating to tourism. It is the same for specialists in heritage conservation, who, while being very capable in dealing with the technical dimensions of their profession, rarely consider tourism and urban planning issues. Indeed, one could argue that many heritage specialists are not only ill-equipped to deal with overtourism issues in urban heritage areas but also do not wish to be part of the visitor industry and refuse to consider the issues related to tourism.

A related issue is that leaders of urban heritage management teams are often specialists in a particular technical discipline, and are ill-equipped to provide the kind of guidance necessary to bring different stakeholders together. Moreover, because of their lack of knowledge of other disciplines, they often distrust other disciplines to deal with the issues they see as their own.

With regard to managing tourism, an interdisciplinary approach would lead key decision makers to re-examine the present emphasis on the growth of tourism arrivals and revenues; place greater importance on enhancing the quality of the tourism experience; focus on increasing residents’ quality of life; plan for environmental sustainability and resilience; and develop strategies and plans that will begin to deal with the root causes of overtourism, so as to prevent it. This will force a recognition on the part of stakeholders that managing tourism and preventing overtourism in urban heritage areas requires interdisciplinary knowledge, planning, management and cooperation.

The quest for an integrated approach and interdisciplinary competencies by its very nature calls for a team approach to all aspects of the planning and management process. The teams should have leaders who possess an understanding of various disciplines, and these leaders should be supported by specialists in a variety of relevant disciplines. The teams should also possess particular competencies (discussed in the next section) that give them the potential to develop integrated and multidisciplinary perspectives on problem definition and problem solving.

There is no expectation that any one individual or group of individuals will have mastery over all the necessary competencies. Nevertheless, there are certain minimum competencies required for an effective urban heritage area planner and manager. Whatever the scale of the destination and the planning and management structure, professionals in urban heritage management need to be able to promote effective cooperation, build partnerships and ensure transparency and the flow of information to key experts. Furthermore, they must also have an understanding of locally-appropriate tourism management competencies. The intent is to ensure that all involved in the process are oriented towards accepting the concerns and principles of other areas of intervention and have supportive administrative structures to accomplish this objective.

What is required are leaders and key decision makers, who are “T-shaped” people (i.e. people who have a breadth of information, knowledge and perspectives) and these leaders and decision makers must be supported by “I-shaped” people (i.e. people who have a depth of expertise in a core competency). Leaders should also have a depth of expertise in leadership (Lewrick et al., 2018). See Figure 1.

The concept of “T-shaped” leaders is very much in keeping with the idea of the “creative generalist” developed by Steve Hardy (2008). The idea has been further explored by David Epstein (2019), who argues that generalists are better at navigating “wicked learning” environments and have broader integrated skills. He argues impact that “in a wicked world, relying upon experience from a single domain is not only limiting, it can be disastrous” (Epstein, 2019, p. 107).

The need to develop common visions guiding development processes

An integrated approach to urban heritage management would allow for the development of an overall vision for the future of the urban heritage areas that is shared by the stakeholders, including an overall vision of tourism’s role in that future. As in any other business or tourism/
planning exercise, a common set of objectives would also be developed, guided by the shared vision of those involved. There needs to be clear articulation of the vision and objectives to ensure that individual stakeholders (public or private) are working within the same parameters.

Developing these common visions is difficult given that stakeholders differ in their preferences. For example, while some residents of urban heritage areas will state a preference for more tourism, to increase their profits and business viability, others in the same area may demand no tourists, while yet other members of the community may prefer a balanced level of tourism development. Similarly, while some visitors may expect only a few other tourists at a destination, others may enjoy the vitality that comes from large numbers of people concentrated in a small area.

**Adopting different ways of thinking**

The teams responsible for managing urban heritage areas need to be agile in terms of constantly updating and changing plans and policies together with managing regulatory environments. This will involve problem solving. “Design thinking” is now widely accepted as a creative and innovative approach to problem solving (Lewrick et al., 2018; Brown and Katz, 2019) and may serve as a useful model for managing and addressing issues faced in urban heritage sites. It is an open process that enables stakeholders to transform their approaches and introduce innovation in how to plan and manage urban heritage areas (World Economic Forum, 2018). A design thinking process can help team leaders and their team members to look for new possibilities, generate ideas, connect people with ideas and develop solutions that allow for creativity, innovation and testing/prototyping. The design thinking process is illustrated in Figure 2.
Alternative governance models that break the mould of urban heritage management offer useful principles and dimensions that can be adopted and incorporated into the planning and management of urban heritage areas in Asia. The two programmes described below (“Main Street America” and “Placemakers”) incorporate multidisciplinary, if not interdisciplinary, thinking and implementation and serve as examples of approaches to addressing overtourism issues in urban heritage areas.

**Main Street America**

This is a programme administered by The National Main Street Center as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s overall mandate. It was established in 1980 and has been implemented in 45 states and in over 2,000 communities across the USA. The programme has a long record of creating jobs, new businesses and encouraging reinvestment. A similar programme was established later in Canada. It follows an integrated approach looking holistically at commercial areas in urban settings. Most of the efforts are managed by a Main Street coordinator who is a generalist. The programme is based on the idea that strategies need to be informed by “a solid understanding of local and regional market data and sustained and inclusive community engagement” (Main Street America, na). The programme works around four key points:

1. economic vitality which seeks to build a resilient economy, seeks new investment and cultivates a network of entrepreneurs supporting the Main Street programme;
2. design which seeks to produce a good quality of space that is inclusive and recognizes the historic character of the area;
3. organization which seeks to build the capacity of leadership within the organization as well as the community and encourages and bills widespread engagement and partnerships; and
4. promotion which develops marketing strategies that recognize the strengths of an historic area and tells the story of the area through interpretation and storytelling.

**Placemaking**

One very promising area of integrative thinking and urban planning and management is the concept of placemaking (UN Habitat, 2016). It is not a new idea, but an old concept based on the work of Jane Jacobs (1961), Kevin Lynch and William H. Whyte (2012). Placemaking can be described as a holistic approach to planning and management that seeks to meet the needs of local residents while protecting the essence of special places.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) initiative has for some time advocated for placemaking. The PPS explains that placemaking can break down silos “by showing planners, designers, and engineers the broad value of moving beyond the narrow focus of their own professions, disciplines and agendas” (Project for Public Spaces, 2007).

The PPS has comprehensively defined what makes a place and has developed an integrated approach, looking at the factors that contribute to the success of planning and managing an urban area. See Figure 3.

**Towards the development of competencies**

Developing competency frameworks is not a new idea. For example, UNESCO (2018) has made efforts to develop a competency framework for cultural World Heritage sites as a means of ensuring the sustainable management of those sites. Similarly, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States are developing sets of competencies for various types of tourism professionals (e.g. hotels, catering and tour guides) and have committed to developing region-wide competencies in selected areas. The member countries recognize that having a common set of competencies will help ensure a consistent set of quality tourism experiences in the various destinations in the region.
Another example of a successful effort to develop and impart interdisciplinary skill and knowledge sets was the creation of the Alberta Historical Resources Intern Programme, which was a collaboration between the University of Calgary and the Government of Alberta. It provided people working on historic sites in the province of Alberta with interdisciplinary courses that gave them an overall view and understanding of each component of the historical resource management process (Jamieson and Buchik, 1988). This was done through a combination of specialty courses that all interns had to take, together with a selection of specialty courses that graduates of the certificate had to master.

The process of identifying what the essential competencies (i.e. skills and knowledge necessary to carry out particular tasks) are for those engaged in urban heritage management has engaged professional groups from various subject areas, national and international organizations, universities and technical schools. Similar to the process of creating a curriculum at a university, developing a competency framework and identifying the essential competencies is the result of discussions and is a process of assessment and decision making.

Determining competencies is challenging. Examining the requirements of professional groups, such as architects and planners, provides important insights into what practicing professionals determine is essential in carrying out various tasks, but these requirements can change from one state/provincial area to another and between countries. Moreover, while there are tourism, heritage conservation and community economic development programmes in various universities and associations, these do not have recognized areas of practice, as architects and planners do, making it difficult to ensure agreement within, at least, provincial/state or national boundaries.

In identifying the core competencies required by urban heritage managers, the authors have chosen to work with a conceptual framework that examines the intersection of four key areas of policy and planning intervention: community economic development, urban planning and design, responsible tourism and urban heritage area planning, as illustrated in Figure 4. These four subject areas are seen as essential in ensuring the responsible and sustainable development of urban heritage sites and preventing and/or mitigating overtourism in these sites.

Below, the four areas of policy intervention will be explored in terms of their particular competencies and then an integrated set of competencies required by those responsible for managing urban heritage areas will be presented. There is no attempt to see the list of competencies provided here as being all inclusive. Rather, the list is simply indicative of what has been identified as competencies by various authorities and by the authors of this paper.

**Disciplinary competencies**

Using the conceptual framework presented above, the four areas of intervention were examined in terms of the possible competencies that would be required as part of the overall process of planning and managing urban heritage areas, particularly with regard to preventing and/or mitigating overtourism.

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**Figure 3** Concept of placemaking

![Concept of placemaking](image_url)

Source: Partners for Public Spaces (2007)
Urban planning

Urban planning is an area of intervention in which professional organizations such as the American Institute of Planners, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Canadian Institute of Planners, etc., have determined the basic competencies that are required for an individual to be able to practice. Despite the ongoing debate within the planning field as to whether planning should be physically/design focussed or more concerned with social, economic and cultural phenomena or interdisciplinary in nature, there is agreement over the core set of competencies (Alexander, 2005; Zehrer and Moessenlechner, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2013).

Tourism planning and development

Most of the academic tourism programmes are hospitality oriented. As the concepts of tourism planning and management are usually not part of the curricula, there is little awareness of this subject-area among many tourism practioners, and academics in the field disagree as to what would constitute a tourism planning and development programme. There is even less agreement regarding what the set of competencies that a tourism planner and developer would need to have in order to deal with overtourism (Breen et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2010; Jamieson, 2012; Jamieson and Jamieson, 2017).

Community economic development

Academic programmes in community economic development and various training and accreditation programmes are offered by institutions of higher learning and professional organizations. As with other fields there is no agreement on the required competencies. The list of competencies related to this field was derived from descriptions of the academic and training programmes. Some programmes consider tourism, but usually from a promotional and expansionary perspective as opposed to it being part of planning and heritage resource protection (Morris et al., 2013).
Heritage planning and management

While there are no formal qualifications for heritage professionals, it is interesting to note that the field has defined a set of competencies for the planning and management of heritage sites. The authors drew from the draft UNESCO (2018) Competency Framework for Cultural World Heritage Sites to identify the requisite competencies in this field for managing urban heritage areas. The competencies developed by UNESCO (2018) cover a wide range of different issues but are oriented to an integrated approach.

Figure 5 identifies the top competencies identified in each of the four planning and management fields. As can be seen in the figure, there is a considerable number of overlapping competencies.

The lists of competencies for each of the disciplines have several key gaps, as listed below:

- urban planning and design sources and community economic development sources did not identify the ability to manage carrying capacity as being an important competency;
- urban planning and design and tourism planning sources did not identify “economic development” competencies, and “engagement and participation” were not emphasized; and
- urban planning and design and tourism planning did not call for integrated planning and management competencies while tourism planning and heritage planning and management did not emphasize the need for problem-solving competencies.

Interdisciplinary and integrated heritage area planning and management competencies

From the lists of competencies in Figure 6, the authors identified the key competencies that team leaders and management teams require, given the complexity of Asian urban areas and the forces at work on them. The three types of competencies are discussed next.

![Figure 5 Key disciplinary competencies](image-url)
Overall interdisciplinary and integrated perspective competencies

The first level of competencies is concerned with the overall skills and knowledge that team leaders require in order to ensure an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to urban heritage area planning and management. In effect, these competencies are seen as essential in developing the generalist “T” team members discussed earlier. These competencies and perspectives include:

- providing leadership through the use of complex systems thinking in the overall process of urban heritage area planning;
- design thinking approaches;
- understanding the interaction between urban planning and design, community economic development, heritage area planning and community economic development and heritage area planning; and
- leadership competencies to create a shared local vision.

Soft management competencies

Building on the overall interdisciplinary and integrated perspectives, team leaders require soft management competencies. Combined, these competencies will enable team leaders to bring together people who have different ways of thinking so as to facilitate the development of integrated plans to address the issues faced in urban heritage areas, including overtourism:

- Communication competencies that are tailored to particular audiences, including cultural awareness promotion, internal communication and information sharing approaches, writing and public speaking skills, the ability to articulate planning issues and listening skills that take into account cultural differences.
- Conflict management competencies, including negotiation, consensus building, mediation, advocacy, facilitation and adjudication.
- Creative and critical thinking competencies based on theories and methods of creative and critical thinking, stressing reason, logic, imagination and innovation.
- Engagement and participation competencies using cross-cultural stakeholder management and techniques such as cultural mapping and participant observation.
- Problem-solving competencies designed to deal with complex problems using problem analysis, balancing technical competence, creativity and pragmatism.
Emotional intelligence competencies, including being aware of one’s own feelings, the ability to self-regulate (skills in controlling emotions), self-motivation and empathy. These skills will enable people to understand the differing perspectives of the various stakeholders (LaNasa, 2018).

Technical competencies

The team leaders will be supported by subject experts, but to perform well, the leaders must have competencies in the following key areas:

- change management competencies that address the strategic and operational dimensions of technology, process and people;
- analytic competencies, including data analysis, analysis of demographic information to discern trends in population, employment and health, ethnography methods to understand the behaviour of visitors and residents, data/knowledge management, community mapping and GIS skills;
- visualization competencies to assist the various stakeholders in adjusting their ways of thinking, skills in making presentations and exploring new ideas using various techniques and adapting presentations to the goal of the visualization, who it is intended for and what medium is best employed in the context; and
- visitor management, with an emphasis on planning and management competencies relating to carrying capacity, including knowledge of methods for assessing the true costs of visitation, including the hidden costs of tourism, and for measuring the carrying capacity of individual heritage areas; specialized competencies in the mechanisms for reducing visitor numbers to destinations by introducing legal, stakeholder-led and technical initiatives, and in creating planning regulations, especially zoning, as part of managing carrying capacities.

Key planning and management competencies

As noted earlier, team leaders cannot be experts in all areas and need the support of experts in key disciplines, including:

- design competencies, with a firm understanding of spatial structure and physical design, site analysis, knowledge of urban form, urban design policies, design of new buildings/components/services;
- knowledge of economic development mechanisms, including effective methods for supporting regional or local economic development by helping to diversify the economy, increasing income levels of residents and tax revenues, and methods for managing inclusive community economic development processes, including revenue capture and recovery mechanisms;
- heritage area planning competencies, which include knowledge of heritage area governance models, how to carry out heritage impact assessments within a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary context, concept and ideas related to the identification, interpretation and protection of intangible heritage, and zoning and land-use regulations that use fine-grained approaches to protect heritage resources;
- knowledge of infrastructure provision for both residents and tourists, as well as competencies in how to integrate tourism planning and development into overall planning and development schemes;
- marketing competencies, including knowledge of innovative marketing theories and practices, branding, consumer research, social media and branding mechanisms that would allow heritage areas to be competitive from a tourism perspective but not overrun by large numbers of tourists; and
- tourism planning and development competencies, including skills relating to policy making; tourism product development; planning on different levels, timeframes, scopes and geographic foci, planning ideologies.
Conclusion: towards delivering a competency framework

The exploratory competency framework presented in this article should be seen as an initial attempt at defining what is required from urban heritage management teams and individuals in enabling and empowering them to prevent and/or mitigate overtourism in Asian urban heritage areas.

Further development of this framework will require, in the first instance, that each discipline carefully identifies the essential knowledge and skills that would be required for addressing overtourism among those involved in urban heritage planning and management processes. Once the competencies have been agreed upon, the next step should be regional discussion and agreement on specific curriculum development, using methods similar to those used by UNESCO (2018).

Agreeing upon the required competencies is only part of the task, however. As discussed in this paper, in order for a competency framework to be implemented successfully, a significant mindset change is needed on the part of all stakeholders in urban heritage management, especially among those working within the government sector. Interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to urban heritage management, along the lines of the “whole of government” approach, need to be widely accepted.

Achieving such a change in mindset will require implementing change management strategies, prefaced by dialogue with urban heritage managers to convey the benefits for them and their work of changing their practices and of developing new capacities (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). Canada and other countries have long grappled with ways to bring about changes within public sector, and the approaches they have taken, while perhaps not suitable for the Asian context, may offer insights on the way forward (Bakvis and Juillet, 2004; Melchor, 2008). In some cases, the introduction of modern information and communication technology may be helpful in bringing about changes in management practices, paving the way for changes in competencies (United Nations, 2012). The change management process will take time, so this is all the more reason for it to be initiated immediately.

The process of reaching agreement on the competencies and building those competencies will also be time-consuming. The ideal scenario is that all practicing professionals in urban heritage management graduate from programmes with an interdisciplinary curriculum and have all of the competencies required for them to prevent and/or mitigate overtourism, but the reality is that, in the short term at least, that is not possible. Given this reality, there need to be both short-term and long-term strategies.

In the short term, until the managers of urban heritage have developed the required set of competencies, it would be advantageous if those presently working in the urban heritage management field were at least able to work cooperatively and in an interdisciplinary environment. This may at least overcome some of the obstacles and issues faced in managing urban heritage areas. Given the rapid growth of tourism in Asia, it is important that even small steps are taken in the near future to prevent and/or mitigate overtourism and thereby prevent further loss of heritage.

Potential areas for further research

The competency framework discussed in this article requires development, and therefore further research is needed. In particular, research is needed to determine key approaches and to assist each discipline to reach agreement on the particular competencies relevant to preventing overtourism. The research, which would benefit from employing a design thinking approach, should bring together specialists from various disciplines to define curriculum needs. The following questions could provide guidance:

- Is an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, as put forward in this article, realistic in the Asian context?
- Is the quest for a generalist appropriate in the Asian context?
- Should there be one set of competencies for all of Asia or would there need to be different sets of competencies for each region and for each of the various types of urban heritage areas?
- Who can best define the competencies: academics or professionals?
What are the various ways of delivering the curriculum, given distances, different levels of formation, economic challenges, etc.?

What other competencies would be required to achieve responsible planning and management in urban heritage areas so as to avoid overtourism?

What should be the nature of teams in terms of composition and functioning (based in part on design thinking)?

What are possible ways to develop urban heritage area interdisciplinary teams and what are the competencies that are necessary to do this?

Research would then be needed to determine the most effective delivery systems for both existing practitioners as well as for students enrolled in professional programmes. It would be useful to explore various types of an online portals, to find a system that would successful in providing a platform for partnerships between academics and professionals and for sharing information, courses and modules, and hosting interactive experiences.

Furthermore, an assessment is needed of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals to determine whether it is effective in facilitating the research and development process. In addition, academic researchers working with organizations such as UNESCO should work together to look at possibilities for cost sharing in developing curricula and courses.

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Further reading


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Cities and tourism, a love and hate story; towards a conceptual framework for urban overtourism management

Frederic Bouchon and Marion Rauscher

Abstract
Purpose – Overtourism is a term that has emerged in media over the past few years. Issues of carrying capacity that were limited to tourism sites have recently spread to places with no tourism background. The development of new technologies and network hospitality (NH) has enabled a blurring of roles. Residents and tourists are more than often using the same infrastructure and spaces creating tensions. This reinforces issues related to ownership and citizenship within a new context. However, there is only a limited number of studies linked to urban overtourism, and a categorisation of cities is necessary to apprehend the phenomenon. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the current narratives of overtourism in cities and their impact on selected stakeholders.

Design/methodology/approach – This conceptual paper uses a qualitative approach to investigate the case of several cities bearing signs of overtourism. It uses data from public and private sources (statistics, press, city marketing, etc.) from six cities of various size in Europe in which the media reported overtourism syndrome. The data were analysed through a thematic analysis, enabling a categorisation and a typology of urban overtourism.

Findings – Findings show that overtourism is a notion constructed from various aspects, including recently added supply sources such as NH and low-cost carriers. The urban morphology and branding strategy play a major role in the sentiment of overtourism.

Research limitations/implications – The study indicates the need for further research considering the urban destination in a holistic manner, rather than approaching it at the tourist site scale. A further quantitative research could test the model of urban overtourism taxonomy.

Originality/value – The developed urban overtourism typology and framework of analysis. The argument of using the urban morphology understanding and technology to address urban destination overtourism.

Keywords Carrying capacity, Quality of life, Urban tourism, Overtourism, Destination branding, Smart destination

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Cities face challenges linked to tourism that seem to result in a paradox of positive image and overcrowding perceptions. First, a strong institutional branding and marketing efforts portray a positive destination image. Second, negative narratives deriving from tourism contradict this positive branding. Attractive image, quality of life and positive living attributes are positive branding elements sought by destinations (Zukin, 2014). New populations attracted to these places for investment purpose or for their quality of life have created a higher demand within these destinations and consequently lead to an increase in rents. As a result, the poorest residents are often unable to afford housing, and to live in more expensive neighbourhoods (Vicario and Martinez-Monje, 2003; Zukin, 2010). The phenomenon of gentrification is overlapping with processes of public urban advances or rehabilitation of heritage, which in its extremes result in museification of historical centres or brown sites.

Hence, tourism can contribute negatively to the urbanity of a place in affecting its social fabric and contributing to its gentrification (Maitland, 2007). This is already evident in protected districts of
historical cities, such as the old Macau, Bruges or Venice, that have been trying to address carrying capacity for years (Seraphin et al., 2018; Staff, 2008). Relationship between residents and visitors in these touristified neighbourhoods have generated extended literature (Graham, 2003; Jurdana and Sušilović, 2006; Maruyama and Woosnam, 2015; Nisbett, 2017). Up to the mid-2010s, these difficult issues seemed more associated with small destinations unable to meet the demand due to limited carrying capacity. It was assumed that larger cities could easily absorb mass tourism; yet recent developments have showed a different situation. In Europe, the number of international tourists grew from 331m in 2000 to 470m in 2018. Urban destinations concentrated the growth, to the level of unsustainability.

2. Literature review

Cities as tourism playground: urban touristification

The contemporary city is becoming a concentration of infrastructure based on leisure and creativity in which tourism plays a complex role. The urban destination is characterised by constantly renewed diversity, offering a wide variety of activities to visitors (Ashworth and Page, 2010; Hannigan, 1998). In fact, the city is the place to experience par excellence. This notion plays a major role in the positioning of cities as influential hubs in a competitive global environment. Hall and Rath (2006) indicate that the manipulation of the image of the destination and the projection of an exceptional quality of life contribute to the process of re-evaluating urban spaces at the local level, in response to the movements of globalisation. At the same time, the series of primary attractions and infrastructure of the tourist city are also used by residents. Residents and visitors coexist using the urban spaces, and the roles are easily blurred. Perceptions of locals of these diffused identities are subjective and can be multifaceted. On the positive side, locals might enjoy sociability and multiculturalism caused by the presence of diverse nationalities and characters along with restoration of historical sites and valorisation of certain places (Koens and Postma, 2017), which stimulates their pride of belonging to an attractive place. In order to portray a positive light onto a destination, branding and territorial marketing have been used and controlled by institutional tourism organisations (DMOs). In contrast to this coat of officialdom (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008) technological innovation and the development of social networks enable a proliferation of user generated contents which also contributes to the branding of a destination. Tourists also photograph different images of the city well beyond the sanctioned “tourism spaces” (Paül i Agustí, 2018).

Increased frequency and familiarity with travelling and destinations also allows for a more adventurous mindset among tourists that aim for a different tourism experience (Maitland, 2013). It is striking that most branding agencies use this as a liberating factor: “off the beaten track, live as locals, etc”. Tourists venture beyond the beaten tracks, and enjoy the thrill of experiencing the city like a citizen would, albeit temporarily. The recent development of uberized services has transformed the fiction of “When in Rome do as the Romans do” into a reality with multiple consequences. In this respect, city tourism is changing its nature from a mere passive sightseeing towards the search for new individual experiences by means of actively participating in an unfamiliar urban scenery (Romeiß-Stracke, 2007). However, this has also sharpened a perception of non-residents invading into spaces where they do not belong, in cities of various scale worldwide. The alterations caused by this experience economy have led to city tourism representing a rapidly expanding travel segment. In fact, international city trips have been the fastest growing segment between 2007 and 2017, rising four times as much as the holiday market altogether (IPK, 2019). In this increasingly competitive environment, cities need to position and market themselves by adopting branding strategies to attract the right amount and mix of tourist trade (Valls et al., 2014). Seraphin et al. (2018) find that the branding strategy of destinations plays a significant role in the emergence of overtourism. Among its negative aspects are deteriorating privacy and tranquillity, overload of public transport systems, crowding out of day-to-day facilities and a speculative housing market. Whenever the negative side passes a certain threshold, in some instances fuelled by media coverage, it may turn into hostility towards tourists as remarkably observed in Barcelona or Venice. This phenomenon of tourism rejection in large cities is quite recent, and it seems to be the unexpected effect of local governments’ and tourist boards’ tourism strategies.
Defining urban overtourism

“Overtourism” or “tourismphobia” is a relatively new term coined by press and media (Seraphin et al., 2018). Tourism academe has been using words such as “carrying capacity” and “crowding” to describe negative tourism impact for decades (European Parliament, 2018). The most stereotyped examples derive from mass tourism in places with little space for growth such as monuments (Colosseum in Rome, Pyramids of Egypt, etc.) and fast-urbanised natural sights (beach resorts such as Benidorm in Spain). However, the recent use of “overtourism” is associated with negative urban experiences. It is actually influenced by a conglomerate of various framework conditions which are not attributable to tourism alone. Higgins-Desbiolles (2018) argues that this unsustainable direction is due to the economic-drive narratives in society. The situation originates from a conjunction of enabling factors. Of these, the first, is the easiness to travel, with alleviated immigration procedures, air liberalisation and dissemination of low-cost air carriers (LCC). This has enabled an exponential growth of tourism arrivals (van der Steina and Rozite, 2017). The cruise ship market has also experienced a major growth (Trancoso González, 2018). These two prominent examples put the respective destinations at the forefront of the tourism roadmap with quick, easy and cost-efficient additions to the bucket list of the tourism experience economy. This is even more the case for city trips considering the fact that most city visits are short-term ranging from day trips without overnight stays to stays of only a few days (Smith, 2009). The second factor is the easiness to find accommodation in a destination. The development of network hospitality (NH) has provided a greater variety in accommodation options, resulting in new tourist behaviours and induced pressure on housing market (Lim et al., 2017; Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). The third factor is the urban transformation which emphasises the experience and creative economies, and the quality of life. Finally, quicker and better information provision mainly spurred by technological advancements has enabled more independence in travel. These elements contribute to a differing spatial model that affects the tourism perceptions in an urban context.

As outlined, the concept of overtourism goes beyond the issues brought by carrying capacity and the tensions emerging from the presence of too many tourists at certain places and times. The European Parliament (2018) study suggests five indicators for overtourism:

1. tourism density (bed-nights per km²) and intensity (bed-nights per resident);
2. the share of Airbnb bed capacity of the combined Airbnb and booking.com bed capacity;
3. the share of tourism in regional Gross Domestic Product;
4. air travel intensity (arrivals by air divided by number of residents); and
5. closeness to airport, cruise ports and UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

These indicators point towards a quantitative approach. Because of the crosscutting nature of tourism, there is much data available but there are also many methodological challenges. Therefore, qualitative aspects need further reflection. For example, crowding is a perception that derives from personal characteristics and characteristics of others resulting in a feeling of density. A high density of tourists might still be acceptable, though, if there is a sense of organisation; for instance, in the case of a well-managed theme park (Neuts and Nijkamp, 2012). In contrast, tourist expectations of authenticity might be frustrated in cities facing difficulties to handle too many arrivals. Hence, overtourism is a much more complex phenomenon in which the impact of tourism exceeds physical, environmental, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds. These thresholds are subject to space and time dimensions. In fact, overtourism is now more a question of feeling and perception among impacted parties. UNWTO (2018) defines it as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors’ experiences in a negative way”. This makes it even more prevalent in urban areas where borders between residential life and tourist visits are blurred and activities are intermingled. More specifically, it requires an understanding of the attributes of the new urban tourism, and to what extent tourism has
ventured beyond its traditional spaces, in order to comprehend how this affects residents and their sense of quality of life. Drawing upon some of the elements used in Mercer’s, 2019, quality of living city ranking, liveability in urban environments is associated with appealing recreational activities, good public services and transport, consumer goods availability or suitable housing. Perceived impairment of this local habitat by tourists causes discontent, which may ultimately lead to intense aggression; as has been the case in cities experiencing overtourism.

**Contested tourism spaces**

Most often, tourism areas are to be found in the city centre. In larger urban conglomerates, one can identify several tourism zones spread across a wider spatial area. The pressure of the tourism industries oftentimes forces residents out of the city centres and tourism subcenters. Subsequently, everyday facilities are vanishing and tourism amenities such as souvenir shops and large international clothing, restaurant or hotel chains are taking over (Dumbrovská, 2017). This touristification of certain areas leads to what García-Hernández et al. (2017) call a banalization and homogenisation of the respective places. Prices and rents are rising, again forcing locals to move out of the area followed by merchants accommodating local demands. A vicious circle of tourism arises which leads to gentrification of the neighbourhood (Maitland, 2007). Albeit, this transformation of city spaces is not attributable to tourism alone. Many times it is a general urban change process more or less propelled by increasing tourism (Fox Gotham, 2005; García Herrera, 2007). Urban theorists have discussed these changes, with numerous urban “occupy” movements by those excluded from the “right to the city” (Harvey, 2013). Likewise, Selby (2004) included tourism in his study, and referred to the inherent contradiction in promoting the destination while ignoring the impacts on the society, and the possible spatial and citizenship competition between tourists and residents.

Furthermore, studies show that destinations, and particularly cities, since they have a large pool of room supply are not equally equipped to face the impact of NH. Airbnb might be beneficial to mature and steady cities, while in the case of booming destinations such service brokers may lead to a harmful commercialisation (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). In this context, the emphasis from the media in some cities was more on the negative impacts of NH that brings tourists beyond the “tourist paths” and disturb residents (Mody et al., 2019). Therefore, NH is changing the geographical distribution of tourism flow in cities. With Airbnb and similar platforms, residential neighbourhoods become part and parcels of the tourist arena. Suspicion of gentrification and residential market disturbances run high, although studies show socio-spatial nuances. Quattrone et al. (2016) showed a clear distinction between entire homes and private rooms for hire. “Airbnb rooms tend to be offered in areas with highly-educated renters, while homes tend to be offered in areas with owners of high-end homes in terms of house price”. Novy (2018) finds that anti-tourism feelings are highest in areas where other conflicts and tensions over urban space and resources are present as well. The complexity of the situation reinforces the need to study issues related to citizenship and the respective quality of life perception within a new urban tourism environment.

Narratives report on various responses from public and private stakeholders. The public sector has reacted to NH in developing regulations that limit access to the residential housing market. That includes setting minimum or maximum lengths of stay, creating a temporary accommodation license, prohibiting private rooms from being rented out and establishing zoning allowing tourist accommodation (Martin-Martín et al., 2019). Nevertheless, protests run high. Joppe (2018) argued that host communities and fringe stakeholders were more likely to protest overtourism effects whereas policy makers have difficulties apprehending it, because of its complexity and the fragmented nature of tourism governance. Some have argued that the development of IT applications could help to solve the issues of crowding, for instance in using data to identify points of congestions and divert tourists ( Pearce, 2018). Some cities have tried such technologies in monuments, and resorts integrate it as well. But cities show considerable differences in their ways of reacting to overtourism.
3. Methodology

This paper aims to provide a better understanding of the overtourism phenomenon in cities. It intends to complement and expand the existing, more statistically-oriented, theories of overtourism explanations. Such analytical generalisation is best done by using a case study approach (Yin, 2009). A case study allows an intensive analysis, using multiple sources of evidence which may be qualitative, quantitative or both, of a single entity which is bounded by time and place (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Furthermore, it permits to set people and institutions involved in the overtourism phenomenon as well as their respective experiences, attitudinal and behavioural responses in their social and geographical context (Veal, 2011). Therefore, interpretation of the various data compiled in the cases allows to gain a more holistic view on the subject in order to construct a theoretical framework. Since overtourism is a multifaceted phenomenon, cross cases (Gerring, 2007; Leavy, 2014) were chosen to isolate topics that emerge in different settings and to trace interconnecting issues. This also provides for a higher external validity (Veal, 2011).

Cities were chosen first according to their global impact, and power of attraction, regardless of their population, following Taylor’s (2004) categorisation of global cities. The importance of overtourism criticism from various stakeholders was the second criteria of selection. The intention was to portray the entire perceived exposure spectrum and, consequently, cases that do not include the obvious or detailed observational evidence of overtourism marked by the others were also included (Yin, 2009). This resulted in the selection of six European cities of multiple sizes. Although they share this common perception they differ in terms of morphology and the impact tourism has on their economy. Investigating them in a case study approach helps to contribute to our knowledge of destination as well as the awareness of the overtourism perceptions. Based on Taylor (2004), we propose the Alpha destination Paris, the Beta destinations Berlin and Barcelona, the Gamma destination Munich and the Delta destinations Regensburg and Venice. The following chart gives an overview of the defining quantitative figures of the six investigated cities (Figure 1).

Publicly available, secondary sources were used for data collection. Due to the exploratory, theory-building nature of the research, cases were reviewed by an inductive cycle as proposed by Veal (2011). In a first step, a thematic analysis (Leavy, 2014; Yin, 2009) was conducted to search for common topics of analysis. The structure of the case study descriptions as well as of the discussion section follows the identified themes. The second step comprised a clustering process within those themes in order to find categories with common or differing patterns. The findings of this second step led to a typology of cities in overtourism. The third step involved an aggregation and in-depth interpretation of the thematically analysed data in the case studies as well as of the aspects found in the literature to formulate a perceptible construct (Sarros et al., 2002). This final step culminated in the conceptual framework proposed in this paper.

![Figure 1 Quantitative tourism indicators of researched cities](image-url)
4. Case studies

Paris

The French Capital city comprises more than 12m people in its metropolitan area. Considered as an Alpha Global City (with London, New York and Tokyo) the city has a long history of tourism activity and an extensive infrastructure. Iconic places like the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, the Louvre, Versailles, the Champs-Elysées, Disneyland and a vibrant cultural life make it a prime global attractive destination despite an increased cost of living. Notwithstanding numerous positive attributes associated with the city, its brand equity has suffered from an ageing infrastructure, limited tourism branding and from recent socio-political upheavals in France. Due to the latter, and although tourism represents a significant share of economic activity, the governance is careful not to pit the interests of the tourism industry against that of citizens and residents. The successful 2024 Olympics bid acts as a catalyst to requalify derelict northeastern districts. Alongside improved quality of life, access and branding, these areas are also meant to become an extension of the core tourism areas of the city.

In 2018, there were 24.1m hotel guest arrivals and 49.4m overnight stays. The total tourism arrivals are estimated at 38.2m. Tourism showed a 68 per cent growth between 2005 and 2018 despite negative years in between due to terrorist acts. Two airports, Charles de Gaulle (CDG) and Orly connect the city. CDG handled 72.2m passengers and Orly 32m in 2018. Being Air France hubs, there is a majority of transit passengers. Yet, the share of low-cost carriers increased to 35 per cent at Orly and 13 per cent at CDG in 2018 despite opposition by the national air carrier. The growth of low-cost carriers is not significant in terms of tourist arrivals but shows an increasing trend.

There are approximately 25,000 short-rental apartments servicing the tourist market in Paris city, while it is estimated that there are a total of 65,217 apartments for short-term rental in Greater Paris (Adamiak, 2018). This corresponds to about 1.8 per cent of the entire central Paris pool of private apartments. Although not negligible in a tight real estate market, this figure remains lower than the 10 per cent of empty Parisian apartment used as the second homes. The recent studies on the development of NH in Paris have focussed more on its impact on the conventional hospitality infrastructure (Heo et al., 2019). Tourism Industry professionals showed protectionist trends, arguing of unfair competition. However, the emergence of NH seems to have captured a latent demand in Paris rather than diverted regular hotel clients from the conventional hospitality businesses. The interests of the tourism operators and tourism employees were often opposed to those of residents who had no benefits from it (Sharma and Dyer, 2009). In engaging previously non-involved stakeholders to become shareholders of tourism, the sharing economy has expanded the pool of tourism beneficiaries, although they might be also prime victims of the phenomenon with residential disturbances and increased costs (Errard, 2019a; Heo et al., 2019).

Media and Civil Society on the other hand are more concerned with a new layer of gentrification in a city that continues to lose residents. Reactions have been strong from NGOs who are opposed to the development of tourist apartments that compete with locals in the rental market. Measures were taken to protect the housing market. National laws were drafted to include these restrictions within the Tourism and Construction Regulations Journal Officiel (2014). Bylaws limit the total number of days to 120 per year an individual may rent a room or a flat for short-term stay. Hosts must register their listing at local authorities in order to operate. Despite this, the City of Paris is involved in various lawsuits against renters, and against NH operators (Errard, 2019b).

Berlin

With 3.7m inhabitants, the German capital of Berlin is the largest city in the country. Berlin markets itself as the city of freedom. Besides the official branding, Berlin’s reputation is one of tolerance, laid-back atmosphere and coolness. The latter term has been fostered by the press several times (e.g. Trejos, 2018). Promotional activities of the city focus on the administrative district of the German government as well as on monuments and memorials as contemporary witnesses of Germany’s history of division. In addition, art museums, architectural highlights or urban development projects are advertised among the top highlights of Berlin’s tourism sights. Berlin’s party and nightlife scene is underlined in the media. Berlin has no clear centre in terms of a
conventional tourist bubble. Instead there are four districts in the centre, which also embrace the touristic hotspots.

In 2018, Berlin counted 13.5m guest arrivals and 32.9m overnight stays. Tourism showed an exceptionally high growth especially in the years between 2005 and 2015 when figures roughly doubled. Seasonality exists although not too pronounced showing a peak in June and a trough in January. Currently Berlin has two airports. Tegel airport handled 22m passengers in 2018. The share of low-cost carriers increased to 44 per cent from 15 per cent in 2017 which is mainly due to consolidating trends in the German airline market. Although Schönefeld airport is smaller, with 12.7m passengers in 2018, it grew exceptionally by almost 90 per cent since 2013. Additionally, the share of low-cost carriers has always been high at this airport reaching 90 per cent in 2018.

The hospitality sector grew at a significantly lower pace than guest arrivals and thus did not keep up with visitor growth in the city. In line with this observation, the number of beds per resident is rather low at 3.9 per cent. This seems to be compensated by NH. There are currently over 22,552 listings in the city of Berlin, almost 70 per cent thereof in the main tourism districts. Airbnb density (i.e. listings per resident in the district) is highest in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (2 per cent).

Disapproval of tourism became manifest around 2011 already putting the rising number of tourists and the fear of crowding out of everyday facilities at the centre of attention (Focus, 2011). Mobilisation against tourism gained ground when growth in tourism numbers was highest and has been intense since that time, most remarkably in the district of Kreuzberg (Lindemann, 2018; Reimann, 2011; Stallwood, 2012), a neighbourhood which was and still is associated with keywords such as creativity, diversity, tolerance and start-up businesses, but also hosts a large club and bar scene. Discontentment is expressed with crowding, noise, drinking and loutish behaviour, litter on the streets, lack of tourist spending and rising housing prices. Residents have recently been successful in stopping the construction of a hotel and hostel complex with 700 beds in Kreuzberg (Dresen, 2019). In response, the German Hotel and Restaurants Association (DEHOGA) argued that many visitors in the district are the Berlin residents themselves. Additionally, Airbnb has also been at the centre of attention due to a shortage in living space combined with rising housing prices. The NH market has been under observation by the city authorities since early on and has been subject to numerous studies (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2018; Skowronnek et al., 2015).

Due to the severe complaints, Berlin is now trying to develop tourism on a qualitative frame, incorporating residents and their needs into future tourism plans, and is developing tourism within a spatially differentiated perspective. Tourism authorities formulated a concept for a “city-friendly and sustainable Berlin Tourism” (dwif-Consulting and Humboldt-Innovation, 2017) in order to address some of the problems. For example, since Berlin is a rather inexpensive option for a city trip, the goal is to improve value creation with existing tourists rather than to increase the mere number. Additionally, the uneven spread of tourists is tackled by enhancing and integrating less visited areas and the outskirts of Berlin. “Off-the beaten track” or “insider tips” are stated as new forms of urban tourism helping to ease the crowding problem. In terms of Airbnb offers public authorities had already reacted in 2014 with a law against misuse of living space which was reinforced mid-2018. The law limits the size of rental properties as well as the rental period. Also in 2014, Berlin introduced a city tax for private, not business-related, overnight stays. Despite these measures, overtourism is still a topic in the capital more or less driven by tourism-related debates.

Barcelona

Barcelona, the second largest city in Spain, and the proud capital city of Catalonia is one of the largest tourist destination in Europe. Attractions include Mediterranean climate, open lifestyle, urban beaches, shopping, the Gothic Quarter and modernist Gaudi architecture with icons, such as the Sagrada Familia and Park Güell. Until the 1990s, Barcelona was merely a business and trading city, and a gateway to the seaside resorts of the Costa Brava. The 1992 Olympics enabled a major urban facelift and an evolution of economic activities towards leisure and tourism (González, 2011; Nunan and O’Brien, 2012). The combination of a rich cultural offer, quality of life, aggressive branding, Mediterranean climate and urbanistic rejuvenation has turned the city into a leading European tourism destination, and a tourism destination success story. However, tourism has grown to a
point where a disconnect is felt between the tourism projects and the city desired by the locals (Meya, 2015).

Between 2010 and 2016, the total number of hotel night stays in the city almost trebled from 7.8m to 20.7m (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2016). Tourist arrivals have experienced a similar growth reaching 18m in 2018. This includes a large number of day-trippers, either tourists staying at Costa Brava seaside resorts or cruise passengers. The daily arrivals of these tourists correspond with the “tourist tide” seen on the Ramblas and historic city centre (Bosch, 2017). For instance, between 1990 and 2016, the number of cruise passengers rose from 115,000 annually to 2.7m. Cruise ships like the Allure of the Seas can bring 6,500 passengers onto the city, with limited benefits beyond retail shopping. Barcelona airport handled 50m passengers in 2018, and doubled its 2005 figure. Low-cost carriers represent 57 per cent of the market share in 2018, and Barcelona is the final destination for more than 80 per cent of passengers.

Overtourism has become a polarising discourse in Spain. Several demonstrations from residents were held and the city has witnessed unwelcoming attitudes towards tourists (Séraphin et al., 2019; Oliver et al., 2018). The exasperation comes from a sentiment of competition over the urban spaces between users. Housing market tensions and disturbance of residential life with noisy and rowdy behaviours from tourists are also driving the saturation. Hotel operators have not expressed such negative feelings despite a continuous growth of tourism supply. With NH, the total tourist lodging offer reaches more than 260,000 beds, of which 40 per cent are informal, for more than 34m overnight stays yearly (Bosch, 2017). The number of paying NH night stays went from a marginal figure to 10,557,367 in 2016. Airbnb accommodation data shows 18,450 listings (InsideAirbnb, 2019). The City introduced new regulations to further limit the growth of NH platforms and had an open conflict with Airbnb including several court cases, and suppressed more than 3,500 listings in the city (Montilla, 2018). Since 2018, hosts can rent out their property for short-stays for up to 90 days per year. Companies operating entire apartment buildings as short-term rentals are restricted from undermining the housing market, and required to have the same license as a hotel. Furthermore, the City issues licenses for short-term rentals for apartment owners. Short-stay rentals are required to have their own entrance, separating tourists from permanent residents living in the building. This is expected to limit the supply of listings in the city centre, and balance the housing market. Long-term rental to locals is yet again to become a lucrative option. Since 2015, the City issued a moratorium on new licenses to cool down the housing market. In creating a scarcity of offer, the short-term rental apartments’ value is estimated about €80,000 higher than a similar apartment without license (Fernandez de Castro, 2018). The city DMO, BarcelonaTurisme has created the Barcelona Sustainable Tourism plan. However, the main objectives are market driven: “to establish the sustainable destination and reinforce prestige and image, […] and to promote the city to target groups already aware of sustainability issues”. This included tourism operators, SE and NGOs. Despite this attempt, the city has faced an avalanche of resentment against overtourism.

Munich

Munich is the capital of Bavaria in southern Germany. With 1.5m inhabitants, it is the third largest city in Germany after Berlin and Hamburg. Munich advertises itself with its century-old buildings and monuments dating back to the Kingdom of Bavaria, but also with more modern sights as well as the cultural offer present in the city. Globally known for its Oktoberfest and its related beer culture, the city tries to maintain and demonstrate its traditions embedded into contemporary developments. Munich ranks third in Mercer’s 2019 worldwide Quality of Living City league table.

Guest arrivals as well as overnight stays have risen by 4–5 per cent annually over the past ten years reaching 8.3m and 17.1m, respectively, in 2018. 2018 showed exceptionally high growth rates of 9.3 per cent in terms of guest arrivals and 6.5 per cent in terms of overnight stays. The hospitality market has grown even stronger especially in the last four years. Occupancy and price rates are above the German average (Colliers International, 2018; HRS, 2019). Seasonality is not very pronounced with a soft peak in the summer months. Guest arrivals and overnight stays in September are also strong due to the Oktoberfest which regularly attracts more than 5m visitors.
Munich airport is the eighth largest in Europe (Flughafen München, 2018). Of the 46.3 million passengers in 2018 half are transit passengers and the share of low-cost carriers has been well below 20 per cent. Low-cost carriers usually arrive at the Allgäu Airport Memmingen. Although Memmingen is a 120 km away from Munich’s city centre it can be assumed that a significant amount of arriving passengers are Munich visitors. The airport is rather small and handled 1.49 million passengers in 2018; 98.9 per cent of them arrived by low-cost carriers.

Touristic sites in Munich are dispersed throughout the whole city. However, several districts are highlighted explicitly, among others the old city in the centre. Major sights in the city centre are a little spread apart but still within walking distance. Other touristic zones can easily and quickly be reached with a well-established public transport system, including remote spots. This way they serve as detached extensions to the tourist bubble in the city centre (Kagermeier and Gronau, 2017).

Overtourism does not seem to be an issue in the city at present. Very few articles concerning this topic can be found in the press. Among those that do refer to overtourism, no negative connotation is visible (Buchwald, 2019; Stadt München, 2018). The same holds for research that was conducted in this direction (Berger, 2018; Kagermeier and Erdmenger, 2019; Kagermeier and Gronau, 2017). Recent surveys (2018) questioning residents with regard to their perception of tourism in Munich revealed only limited discontentment (Buchwald, 2019; Kagermeier and Erdmenger, 2019). Mainly, a crowding effect was felt in the shopping pedestrian zone in the city centre and the public transport line running between the two ends of the zone. Neither noise, unsuitable behaviour nor crowding out of facilities played a notable role.

Not mentioned by the surveyed residents but addressed by representatives of the hospitality industry is the market distortion caused by Airbnb (e.g. Kotteder, 2019). City authorities have reacted with a law against misuse of living space. It prevents private housing from being rented out more than 8 weeks per year. In fact, a legal case is pending where the city of Munich requires Airbnb to make names and addresses of hosts who violate this law available (Kohrs and Moser, 2018; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2019).

Public tourism institutions sketch a positive picture of the development of Munich’s tourism. They report on growing visitor numbers, new attractions in various locations throughout the city as well as the goal to be among the Top 10 destinations in Europe (Stadt München, 2018). The potential of digitalisation to preserve the character of the city and enthuse visitors, as well as the necessity to have a common strategy among all players in the tourism industry is highlighted. According to Munich Tourism (Tourismus Initiative München, 2019) the hospitable openness of locals is part of the city’s unique selling proposition. Nevertheless, the current general public debate on overtourism is recognised by the tourism authorities and is evidenced by wanting to pursue a controlled and sustainable growth in the tourism strategy while assessing it from a citizen’s point of view.

Venice

Venice, the former maritime city-state of the Doges is a global tourism destination. St-Mark’s basilica and square, the Grand Canal and Renaissance and Baroque architecture have inspired many places in the world. Events such as the Venice Carnival, a gondola trip and countless museums make it a benchmark for romantic and heritage travel. This strong branding is also associated with the idea of a “museum” city, deprived of any functions that otherwise characterise a city (Seraphin et al., 2018). Venice’s carrying capacity has been an issue since the 1980s. Residents left the city for the mainland from the 1970s due to the insular situation and high cost of housing, and maintenance of buildings. The gentrification process accelerated between the 1980s and late 1990s. With a limited size, and a unique configuration, it has long characterised the overtourified city, emptied of its residents, to only remain a “historical themepark […] that yet remains a major international tourist attraction” (Staiff, 2008).

Visitors’ arrivals as well as overnight stays amounted to 5 million and 11.7 million, respectively, in 2017. The growth, modest between 2010 and 2015, has accelerated since that year at a fast pace. Visitor numbers indeed grew more than 8 per cent between 2016 and 2017. More than 14.5 million passengers flew to Venice in 2018. The number is double that of the 2005 arrivals.
This makes Venice the third largest airport in Italy. The share of low-cost carriers is above 75 per cent. The city is served by two airports; Marco Polo airport concentrates ¾ of arrivals while Treviso airport receives the remaining, exclusively on low-cost carriers.

The hospitality sector has benefited from this growth, while the NH offer has trebled in the meantime to 7,870 listings (Adamiak, 2018). The number of cruise passengers encountered a sharp decline from 1.8m in 2013 to 1.4m in 2017. Arrivals of large cruise ships in the lagoon remain a point of contention, due to the environmental damages and low economic benefits to the city (Città di Venezia, 2017). Tourist arrivals double between low season in winter and peak in the summer months. However, the numbers do not include day-trippers, estimated at 18m. While locals perceive tourism as a necessity given that the economy relies heavily on it, there is a clear focus on mitigating its ecological impact, maximising its revenue and reviving resident population. First, cruise ship tourists and day-trippers are attracting most of the attention. Their presence is considered a nuisance, as they crowd the narrow streets, strain the infrastructure and cause a heavy environmental impact on the lagoon, while yielding very limited economic benefits. Attempts by the local government and NGOs to control arrivals (exclusion of cruise ship from the lagoon, disembarking tax, etc.), or to divert tourists to other districts have not reversed the situation, and were sometimes met with angry responses from residents (La Stampa, 2018). A comprehensive solution, assisted by technology for discerning policies could be a solution. Second, most residents live on the mainland, and work in the historic centre. The gentrification process is quite advanced, and NH brings property owners the opportunity to benefit from tourism. Actually, more than 11 per cent of the properties are listed in NH (InsideAirbnb, 2019). Third, the strategy is to bring back a creative class to the city, able to support the economic changes and revitalise the city, starting with a student population (Russo and Sans, 2009). Finally, Venice illustrates the case of a tourism-based economy, and a spatially segregated environment in which the daily coexistence between tourists and residents is the one of a client–customer relationship.

Regensburg

The city of Regensburg is located in Southeast Germany on the Danube River and is home to 166,500 inhabitants (2017). City roots date back more than 2,000 years. Regensburg is known for its well-preserved medieval city centre, which holds the status of being the only authentically preserved large medieval city in Germany. Consequently, in 2006, the Old Town Regensburg with its city quarter “Stadtamhof” was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In 2018, there were 628,000 guest arrivals and 1.1m overnight stays. Numbers have risen constantly over the past years with a slight peak in 2016. Guest arrivals are seasonal with July, August and September being the most frequented months. Tourism is condensed mainly in the city centre which comprises all sites attributable to the UNESCO World Heritage. These sights, as well as access points to the city such as the central bus and train station as well as river cruise berths are all within walking distance, making an urban transport system of subordinate importance for the visit of the major attractions.

Reproaches pointing towards overtourism first appeared in 2015 but gained traction in 2017 and especially 2018. They are based on two main issues, the river cruise visitors and the NH market. With regard to river cruise tourism, the unpleasant scenery of numerous hotel vessels anchoring at the river banks, the temporally selective overcrowding of the old town as well as the low economic benefit from cruise passengers is mentioned in the press (Koller, 2015; Oßberger, 2018). Furthermore, pollution and noise caused by the diesel engines of the vessels are part of the complaints. Since Regensburg officials welcome river cruise tourism as an important contributor to the tourism economy, this tourism driver requires further thought. Contrary to the general growth trend in the German river cruise market (IG RiverCruise and DRV, 2017) the number of cruise vessel calls in Regensburg has not been growing continuously over the past years. It did in fact decline in 2017 and showed an even deeper trough in 2018. Overall approximately 1,000 cruise ships dock in the city each year. In terms of demographics, tourists from river cruise vessels are clearly senior citizens (IG RiverCruise and DRV, 2017). As they are day visitors, cruise guests are not included in the overnight guest statistics of the city.
The other issue that received critical attention is the amount of Airbnb offers in the old town. Within this context the press talks about increasing pressure on living space in the city which is reinforced by the sharing economy (Donaukurier, 2019; Eckl, 2017; Klein, 2018). The city of Regensburg itself does not consider Airbnb to be a problem at the present point in time. First, according to Airbnb’s own sources, most of the offers are home-sharing propositions and are therefore not reducing the living space for locals (Eckl, 2017). Second, the number of offers compared to total living units are marginal, with no indication of a serious scarcity. Therefore, no regulatory measures have been taken.

City authorities, nevertheless, showed first reactions to forming protests. A new tourism concept was adopted in 2018, incorporating a survey among Regensburg’s residents done in 2017 (Möller et al., 2018). According to this survey, most residents are content with the tourism concept in Regensburg. However, when asked whether the number of tourists should grow even more in the future, especially residents in the old inner city areas disagreed expectably. Price increases and the crowding out of residents’ supply facilities were the acute threats that were mentioned as leading to a reduced quality of life.

Within the new tourism strategy, tourism authorities now brand the city as a “cultural city with world heritage title”. Growth in visitor numbers is set back for more qualitative-oriented approaches. As first measures to relieve intensity and density in the old town, the yearly number of cruise vessels has been set to a voluntary maximum of 1,500 and the number of visitors in guided tours has been cut down to a maximum of 25 (Eckl, 2018). Finally, Tourism governance and visitor management measures are meant to further increase tourism acceptance.

5. Discussion

Since the current indicators proposed by the European Parliament do not give a clear indication of how the perception towards overtourism is created, we propose a new categorisation in order to evaluate the overtourism phenomenon (Figure 2).

Cities are engaged in active promotion strategies, and compete for “global” recognition. The quest for influence, economic development and attractiveness is key to securing a future based on connectivity, creativity (Castells, 2010) and quality of life (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). The touristification of space and the rise of leisure society have enabled cities with adequate infrastructure to brand themselves as tourism destinations and to be validated by the influx of tourists. Ease of tourism is a crucial element towards touristification, and a delicate balance to maintain to avoid overtourism.

Figure 2 From Urban appeal to overtourism

![Figure 2 From Urban appeal to overtourism](image-url)
Ease of access: spatial saturation

Our case studies reveal that overtourism is not always experienced throughout the year and also varies between neighbourhoods. The perception of overtourism in a city depends on space and time gradients. As an example, both Venice and Barcelona show a high tourism intensity throughout the year; however, it is in summer, when tourism arrivals double that overtourism is felt most strongly. Due to seasonality in Berlin and even more so in Regensburg, overtourism is condensed during the summer months. Regensburg in particular experiences an explosion of visitor numbers within a very short time frame, when day visitors disembark from river cruise ships causing a sudden congestion in the inner city. In Munich on the other hand, seasonality is not as pronounced, easing the perception of overcrowding with residents. In Paris, although summer is high season, it is also when Parisians leave the city. We therefore agree with UNWTO’s (2018) strategic suggestion to promote time-based dispersal of visitors.

In line with this outcome is the finding that overtourism is often associated with rapid and/or unexpected growth thereof which has also been mentioned by Koens et al. (2018). In Munich for example, although tourism intensity is high, its growth has been continuous over the past 25 years which may have resulted in a habituation among residents (Kagermeier and Erdmenger, 2019). In cities with more recent and more sudden tourism growth, perceptions of overtourism seem to be more prominent. The way access to the city is provided plays an important role in this context. The case studies showed that a high share of low-cost carriers as well as being part of a cruise travel itinerary can catapult the visitor numbers upwards. This is when residents are abruptly faced with the unfamiliar tourism setting.

A spatial effect manifests in all of the case studies. “Tourism enclaves” are prevalent in the city centres, although bubbles seem to be expanding, outwards to adjacent areas or are actively directed to different places within the urban setting. If infrastructure and local players are not prepared, this causes unexpected increases in visitor numbers and leads to the crowding perception. The accommodation supply distribution in the city plays a role in the concentration of tourists. In some cities, such as Berlin and Munich, the amount of Airbnb offers shows a concentration in the central tourism districts, whereas in Paris and Barcelona it is spread across the entire city, clearly overlapping with residential areas. In some cities, measures have been taken to spread tourists to less visited areas in order to distribute people in space. This intervention, intended to reduce problems associated with overtourism, may inadvertently aggravate the situation, as was the case in Berlin Kreuzberg and Venice. Newly touted areas are residential, they do not seem to fit visitor needs and/or locals are not prepared for the new role of their neighbourhood. The spatial distribution approach, also suggested by UNWTO (2018) in strategies 1 and 3, has to be followed with caution and prudent planning is necessary. As elaborated by Novy (2018): “Neither planned nor marketed as tourist zones means by extension that we are dealing here with areas that were not used to, let alone prepared for increased tourism, and this may well be one of the reasons why we have seen tourism-related conflicts and contestations emerge in many of them”. In this respect, tourism has been fuelled by the search for authenticity, the wish to experience the city as the locals do and experience the lifestyle associated with it (Romeiß-Stracke, 2007), whereas residents perceive these new forms of tourism as an invasion into their everyday life challenging their perception of citizenship.

Nevertheless, in all of the researched cities, tourism officials are well aware of the rising tourism numbers and the problems associated with it. Hence, recently launched new tourism strategies tend to incorporate measure to balance tourists’ and residents’ needs to prevent or alleviate overtourism struggles. Overall, our studies revealed that with regard to tourism saturation, in most cases only some aspects of overtourism are prevalent whereas others seem to be of subordinate importance. According to the narratives, the crowding perception by residents is the most important one.

Ease of lodging: housing ambiguities

Residents consider the main negative tourism impact to be the rising residential rental market prices caused by vacation rental platforms (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). NH, more precisely Airbnb, is perceived as a threat in all of the investigated cities, but there are also other straining factors.
The case of Barcelona shows that more than 7.7 per cent of the rental home supply is made of vacant second homes, stressing the rental market supply. This is compounded by the fact that short-term rentals to tourists have become a more profitable proposition than long-term leases (Pellicer, 2017). The speculative aspect of NH is well documented in cases in Paris, where offers are almost exclusively dominated by entire homes and apartments being rented out (InsideAirbnb, 2019). However, this also occurs in Barcelona, Berlin and to a lesser extent in Munich and Regensburg where some locals face difficulties in renting apartments for long-term lease.

It was shown that rising housing and rental prices and Airbnb offers go hand in hand but the causal relationship is unclear. For example, Milano (2017) shows that between 2004 and 2016 housing prices in Berlin increased dramatically. During the same time renting private housing to tourists became popular. Indeed, districts with the highest concentration of Airbnb offers are those with the highest average rental prices, in particular the central districts also identified as main tourism sites. A similar dynamic seems to have developed in Regensburg, although not yet as pronounced. Therefore, in light of our analysis, NH should not be viewed as an isolated matter. It is rather a result of broader trends as Fuller and Michel (2014) phrase it for the case of Berlin: “But the dynamic of holiday flats, […] is merely providing a visible sign for the ongoing neighbourhood change, and triggering political debate in some cases openly xenophobic expressions in public space in Kreuzberg”. We are therefore in line with other research (Koens et al., 2018) that found that overtourism problems are clearly focussed on just certain areas in the urban tourism setting. Novy (2018) points out that friction between residents and tourists is focussed on particular areas in the city that have to tackle several changes such as rising housing prices, gentrification and other maladministrations that disrupt local communities.

Traditionally, the competition between residents and tourists happens around the major landmarks. A symbolic competition over the use of these public spaces might be expressed at time, but remains contained within the designed “tourist areas”. In our case studies, it became clear that the strongest tension appears in areas where tourism only begins to emerge, notably in residential areas. NH allows for the expansion of tourism beyond the “tourist areas” to residential areas where there was “nothing to see”. In this case, urban morphology plays an important role in the sentiment of contested spaces between residents and visitors. In Paris, there is a long history of social divide, between a middle class core urban area and heterogeneous suburb. In fact, only 20 per cent of Parisians live in the centre, where 80 per cent of NH listings and most tourist sights are concentrated. NH perception is more of another layer of gentrification than a direct nuisance onto limited neighbourhood-life. Venice shares a similar scenario where tourism is tolerated as a necessary evil, and the majority of Venetians no longer live in the historic city, Barcelona presents a different case. Residents have witnessed the transformation of the city into a large-scale destination. Mixed feelings result from this: the pride of putting the city on stage and getting attention, and the opposite annoyance of losing ownership of the place. However, the scenario is closer to the one experienced in Berlin. The contested spaces are mostly within residential areas recently made accessible to visitors through NH. Here, the feeling of unwanted change in the neighbourhood is strongest and fear of tourism making the area not liveable anymore is expressed. This again stresses the fact that overtourism problems are strongly associated with the sensation of losing part of the belongings related to citizenship.

**Ease of experience: storytelling**

Kagermeier and Erdmenger (2019) presume that tension is more likely to appear when there is a large gap between the everyday life of locals and tourists’ behaviour and activities. Since Munich is a high-priced city destination there is no such fundamental lifestyle gap as prevails for example in Berlin or Venice. This observation hints towards the postulate that tourism works best when residents and tourists share a common ground. This way, the latter are not just perceived as “foreign bodies” taking away possessions of residents, but rather as integrated invitees. Based on our case studies, we can therefore underline the suggestions by UNWTO (2018) to not only integrate local stakeholders into the tourism strategy but also to consider tourists as temporary residents to create tourism experiences and products that promote the engagement of residents and visitors alike. In addition to a sensitivity towards crowding, aspects of disturbances and noise are also part of the narratives. In this respect, the type of visitor appears to be important.
Berlin Kreuzberg hosts an extensive club and bar scene. This attracts numerous budget tourists, especially younger clientele that takes advantage of the fact that Berlin has no closing hours. Eventually, disturbances of all kinds are the consequence. Senior cruise guests in Regensburg, on the other hand, are not reported to cause such problems. This leads us to another finding related to the economic contribution of certain visitor types. Whenever tourism spending is high, discontent with guests seems to be less. It becomes obvious when looking at the day visitors from cruise ships in Barcelona, Venice and Regensburg, but also when looking at destinations that are appealing to budget tourists such as Berlin or, as reported by van der Steina and Rozite (2017), Riga. Apparently, divergences are less prevalent with revenue-generating visitors. UNWTO’s advice in strategy 5 to “enhance visitor’s segmentation” and explicitly “discourage visitation of the city of certain visitors segments” is therefore reasonable in light of our analysis. Lastly, the branding and image of the city can reinforce or mitigate the overtourism problem, and the experience narratives. In Munich, locals feel pride in tourism development of the city, and the positive image it enjoys. Media report more on economic benefits and the new array of leisure and cultural offer rather than issues of saturation or difficulty of sharing the space between residents and visitors.

This contrasted situation for cities based on the perceived impact on urban experience, and the perceived feeling of overtourism is captured in a typology of urban overtourism (Figure 3).

Tourism integrated cities are those where residents and tourists share the urban spaces fluidly, and blend in to city life. Both stakeholders have a mutual stake and tensions do not arise to a noteworthy extent. Tourism emerging cities are only recently experiencing a rise in tourism numbers where first tensions are evolving. Intensity is not yet very high and it remains to be seen in which direction the pendulum will sway. In tourism segregated cities, a tourism bubble exists in which visitors are perceived as intruders into some of residents’ public spaces. The main strategy is that of avoidance, and tensions might arise in the use of symbolic urban landmarks. Dysfunctional tourism cities have already gone through the transition of a living space towards a tourism artefact. Residents do not perceive their urban area as functional anymore. It is important to note that the suggested typology is neither definitive nor exclusive. While some cities are on the verge of moving from one section to the adjacent, others seem to be at a stable condition at the moment but may fall into a different category in the future due to favourable or unfavourable developments at some point. The direction of the latter depends on public perception which is influenced by the narratives within the roadmap from urban appeal to overtourism. Consequently, it is crucial to understand who allots substance to the narratives.

Figure 3 Typology of cities in overtourism

![Figure 3](image-url)
From managing tourism to destination smart management

Earlier studies found biases towards positive media coverage when new tourism projects are initiated mainly plotting the economic benefits (Nickerson, 1995). We found that in light of the current overtourism debate the media tends to pick up opinions expressed by a rather small group of residents. These locals more or less aggressively oppose tourists in the urban neighbourhood and can therefore be classified into the active-negative matrix section suggested by Butler (1975). However, as surveys among a wider set of residents reveal, the majority of residents in the city tend to show a rather passive behaviour, although attitude can be positive or negative. Opinions of these locals do not appear in the media. In this context, one may question whether media coverage actually reflects perceptions of the citizens as a whole or whether singular problems are placed into the foreground.

Authorities’ reaction to overtourism mixes containment and diversification strategies (Table I). Dealing with NH is seen as the priority. Local governments responded with rules supporting residents’ rights to live in the city and fight commercial NH and speculation. This can be seen as an ambiguous position since NH is also an entrepreneurship opportunity. The official position was hence to support the private individuals looking at supplementary income while taking the “big fish” like Airbnb to court. Even though this might ease disruptions to a certain extent, it does not dilute public perception of tourism pressure articulated in the narratives.

Although emphasis is put on tourism as an important economic contributor, many tourism authorities have formulated a new tourism strategy stressing the maxim “quality before growth” and focusing on the integration of wishes and expectations of tourists and residents alike. This way the authorities take the public debate seriously and simultaneously try to reach an integrated city status. Barcelona Tourism Board promotes a quality cultural and creative destination image to move away from the perceived “cheap tourism” image. Equal considerations hold for Berlin. Although mentioned on the website, Berlin’s nightlife scene is not prominently promoted by the city itself. It is more a question of travel guides, social media and word-of-mouth that supports the reputation. For the city, it is difficult to move away from this image since controlling this kind of narrative is almost impossible. In the public debate opportunities associated with further tourism development are not emphasised. Few report on smaller hostel or shop owners and their entrepreneurial opportunities resulting from tourism as well as the supplementary income for private apartment owners acting as tourist hosts. The constant development and renewal of the city in terms of cultural offers, events, festivals or upgrade of the infrastructure is neither referred to. This is somewhat surprising considering the fact that these attractions are frequented by locals and at the same time attract visitors and revisitors. In fact, it validates the idea of residents rediscovering and experiencing their city as tourists and helps to elicit resident’s pride to act as a tourist and a host within the urban environment. Thus, it may allow a valuable shift towards the tourism integrated city.

Our analysis demonstrated how the narratives influence perceptions of overtourism parameters. While narratives by private stakeholders such as media may take erratic turns to either side with a tendency to the negative in the current debate, public authorities can help steer city development as well as public perception in a more favourable direction by several means. One has to be careful, however, not to put too much emphasis on regulatory actions. This can be counterproductive since it may accentuate the problem even more as was seen in the case of NH. A balanced approach also stressing the opportunities associated with tourism is sensible. At the same time, in order to design a long-term effective tourism scheme, active-negative voices of locals should not be dismissed even though they are articulated by a minority.

### Table I  Overtourism response strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulatory (containment)</th>
<th>Market diversification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax (tax on arrivals, paying sites, tax on operators, secondary homes, etc.)</td>
<td>Spatial (diffusion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited supply (capped numbers of NH supply, hotels)</td>
<td>SIT, high net-worth market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access (landing rights limited, car park, lanes, etc.)</td>
<td>Seasonality/ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential incentives</td>
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can be an indicator of good or bad health of the destination or, in other words, negative storytelling might be a sign of an unsustainable tourism strategy. Early countermeasures can help pave the way towards an integrated approach where residents do not feel excluded from their right to the city.

A conceptual framework of analysis

Combining the above-mentioned aspects with the suggested city typology culminates in a conceptual framework of cities in overtourism (Figure 4). The proposed conceptual framework can help to embed problems associated with overtourism into a larger context and thus prevent it from being discussed in isolation. It provides a more holistic view on the phenomenon from the specific perspective of the narratives. This is a key aspect since the public debate is usually roused by one publicly visible conflict situation (Postma and Schmuecker, 2017) and measures or strategies taken are in reaction to these singular aspects. Some of the reactions are yet too unspecific (“value before growth”) to be evaluated in detail. Others just shift the problem (“spatial distribution”) but do not take the overall city morphology into account. Still others overreach certain stakeholders while neglecting the wishes and needs of others (“NH regulation”).

We have pointed out that none of these measures should be seen in isolation. Despite the surge of overtourism-related studies, the scale of approach remains at tourism site level. The proposed framework offers a comprehensive vision of tourism and urban management that cannot be dissociated at the destination level. Regardless of the size of the city, the framework apprehends the city in a holistic manner, and is the conceptual base towards the development of an integrated urban destination management instrument. It identifies the variables required to analyse tourism-related issues in a city regardless of its size, morphology, tourism volume and administrative configuration. This instrument would first assess the tourism situation, and provide an overtourism-risk scorecard.

This framework is also proposed to envision another use and establish a destination management instrument at the service of cities. It provides the possibility to use data and smart technologies to regulate overtourism. In that sense, it would be a smart urban destination application that could regulate influxes of arrivals integrating the complexities of a revenue management dimension at the scale of a destination. This would allow for an evolution towards social engineering, a dynamic collection of day-trippers and visitors’ tax and the diffusion and distribution of visitors along time-space variables. In this respect, the framework could be used by public tourism authorities as a basis not only to categorise their city and its competitors but also to
derive more profound recommendations for action to be incorporated into their tourism strategies. Based on this, future research could investigate the framework’s feasibility, and use it to analyse a city’s relationship to tourism.

6. Conclusion

Narratives are increasingly reporting on overtourism and problems associated with it. Recently, issues such as carrying capacity, speculation and gentrification have extended beyond smaller scale destinations to large cities. Easiness to travel, accommodate and consume tourism experiences is generating unwanted side effects to destinations eager to portray themselves in a positive manner. The contrasting perception of a strong tourism image vs an overcrowding experience is paradoxical. Finding the fine balance between the strong institutional branding and the negative perceptions of tourism is a complex challenge for many destinations.

Cities of different sizes, morphology and attractions are facing a general touristification. Some have been exposed to tourism for decades, some are new to the phenomenon, but all meet with challenges linked to the easiness to travel and the ability to blend in the visited cities. The serialisation of urban destinations and the mass-tourism influx require a holistic analysis. So far, challenges have been encountered with a series of isolated measures, which may only shift problems towards a different direction. Thus, a viable solution approach must consider the positive sides of touristification (positive branding, arrivals and business opportunities) as well as the negative sides of overtourism (negative branding and social cost). The development of a concept integrating both sides helps to design a citywide holistic destination management instrument, which incorporates a revenue management dimension. Our conceptual framework will serve as the basis for further analyses towards an integrated solution to overtourism.

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**Further reading**


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Investigating visitors’ perception of smart city dimensions for city branding in Hong Kong

Chung Shing Chan, Mike Peters and Birgit Pikkemaat

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand the perceptions of visitors in terms of multiple aspects of smart cities to allow wise decisions to be made about smart tourist destinations by municipal governments and tourism authorities.

Design/methodology/approach – This study takes a sample of inbound visitors (n = 205) from Hong Kong as an empirical questionnaire-based survey on visitors’ perceptions of these smart city attributes, which are collected from literature, and framed in Cohen’s Smart City Wheel.

Findings – This paper identifies the distinctive factors for branding Hong Kong as a smart city. The results from the factor analysis identify four factors for determining what a smart city is from the perspective of visitors, namely, the quality of a smart society: energy consumption in an urban environment, smart city governance and smart city livelihood. The first two factors further become the determinants of a successful smart city brand considered by visitors, which contribute to their locational decisions and thus the strategies and policies of smart destination branding.

Research limitations/implications – The results obtained can serve as insights for tourism policy makers and destination marketers when considering significant information and communication technology, or other smart and sustainable attributes for city branding (e.g. Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé, 2015), as well as common investment and resource allocation for shared benefits in similar metropolises.

Practical implications – The smartness factors represent important dimensions of urban smartness as prioritized areas for further development, innovation and marketing of tourism industries and enterprises in Hong Kong, as a mature urban destination incorporating the branding of a proposed smart district as a strategy of urban development.

Originality/value – Smart urban development and tourism development have increasingly become inseparable, especially when visitors utilize cities as tourist destinations but share other urban resources and spaces with local citizens. Unlike the development of smart tourist attractions, smart tourist destinations should have a wider scope of smartness. A smart tourist destination may carry similar and overlapping characteristics of smart cities, which may be interpreted by visitors and may eventually affect their perceived image of a city.

Keywords Hong Kong, City branding, Smart city, Smart tourism, Smart tourist destination

Paper type Research paper

Highlights
- the smart city attributes receiving the highest level of importance are related to livelihood conditions;
- smart city structure includes the areas of quality of a smart society, such as energy consumption, smart governance and smart livelihood; and
- the factors “quality of a smart society” and its “energy consumption” are significant determinants of visitors’ willingness to migrate to Hong Kong with the smart city brand.
Introduction

The idea of a smart city is no longer a new concept in academia and policy making; a large number of cities nowadays have started to move toward this mode of urban development (Nijkamp, 2014; United Nations, 2014). The emergence and the growth of the “smart city” concept is not a revolutionary phenomenon but a natural process of the development, evolution and integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into every aspect of sustainable urban development under continuous urbanization (Deakin, 2014; Hollands, 2008; de Jong et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2017; Molinillo et al., 2019). A smart city refers to “an innovative city that uses ICTs and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social and environmental aspects” (ITU, 2014, p. 1). The concept of smartness aims to initiate more effectively and efficiently the functions of technologies in terms of physical features and processes in different parts of cities, but may extend to the governance, people, urban living and urban development systems as a whole (Hatzelhoffer et al., 2012; Neirotti et al., 2014). Smart tourism, which is regarded as an emerging subset of smart city concept, focuses on how the advent of ICTs may lead to more sustainable visitor experiences, activities and destinations (Lamsfus et al., 2015).

Smart destinations are essentially a specific form of geographical context to smart tourism development (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014). These destinations contain and combine principles and infrastructure of smartness that may apply to both urban and rural environments, which support sustainable tourism. These destinations also allow and strengthen the relationships between visitors and their environments so that visitor experiences will be greatly enhanced and satisfied (del Chiappa and Baggio, 2015). On the whole, smart tourism will become part of the smart economy of the destinations, and their background cities or countries. The provision, improvement and development of smart strategies will allow destinations to triumph over other competing places and maintain long-term prosperity and tourism sustainability (Gretzel et al., 2016). The smart city concept has greatly initiated, informed and fostered the conceptualization of smart tourism, mainly through information and other forms of technological advancements (Li et al., 2017). As a result, the connection between smart destinations and the smart city concept has become more apparent and important. Further development of the positioning and marketing of smart destinations therefore followed this trajectory of research and academic discussions (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Calzada and Cobo, 2015; Gretzel, 2011; Hunter et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2015; Li et al., 2017; Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé, 2015; Zhang et al., 2012).

Since cities are clusters of urban infrastructure and resources, residents, inbound and outbound visitors, and other types of users, cities are naturally advantageous for smart tourism development. Increasingly elastic and sophisticated tourism requires more diversified tourism products and services. Consequently, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) nowadays need to become more responsive and efficient in order to deal with changing and dynamic market conditions (Oates, 2016). In most cases, DMOs in cities are either the municipal governments or agencies that are accountable to the governments, which are responsible for destination marketing and branding, in addition to product development and coordination of tourism industries. Smart destination branding should therefore take into account the principles and knowledge of smart tourism, and the attributes and dimensions of smart cities from a wider perspective that embraces a variety of urban life and development (Calzada and Cobo, 2015).

A smart destination not only enriches tourism products and services, but the achievement and the reputation of this smartness may also enhance destination marketing effectiveness, improve visitor experience and further become a unique selling proposition for the destination brand (Boes et al., 2016). The essential bridge between smart tourist destinations and enhanced visitor experiences is the ability to reach visitor recognition of smart attributes (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Wang et al., 2013). Visitors may even consider the destination as a smart destination brand or a broader locational brand, which promises to be an attractive place for longer or repeated stays (Kerr, 2006). Eventually, these visitors may increasingly be willing to visit, re-visit or migrate to the destination due to the attractive smart city attributes offered (e.g. Chan and Marafa, 2016a). It is at this stage when city branding plays a critical role in value creation and connects smart city concept to the branding.
process in the long term (Chan, 2019). The relevance of these smart attributes to visitors and their locational decisions is therefore an important key for successful smart cities. This aligns with the description of smart cities as making innovative use and integration of technologies to optimize resource allocation, effectiveness and efficiency (Hunter et al., 2015), which are all embraced by the idea of sustainable urban governance and improved quality of life (Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015; Storper and Scott, 2009).

To bridge city as both a place for urban development and tourist destination, city branding or specifically, smart city branding, is essential as a strategy for managing reputation, place image and perception based on place identity (Boison et al., 2018). One important step of branding a smart city as a smart destination is to take visitor perceptions and experiences into consideration rather than simply focusing on the ICT infrastructure in cities (Hospers, 2010; Molinillo et al., 2019). To assist municipal government and tourism authorities’ decision-making processes, this paper aims to understand visitor perceptions of the smart attributes provided by a city through the examination of the case of Hong Kong. Based on the responses of a sample of visitors, the objectives of this paper are: to elucidate the level of importance of the attributes of a smart city in Hong Kong; to identify the visitor-perceived factors of smart city dimensions; and to verify the significant determinants of the willingness to migrate to Hong Kong if the city carries a smart city brand. The results reveal the structure of visitor-perceived smartness of Hong Kong and the factors leading to its sustainable and smart development. The findings of the study also serve as insights for tourism policy makers and destination marketers to consider the significant ICTs or other attributes for city branding (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé, 2015), as well as common investment and resource allocation for shared benefits in similar metropolises.

Smart city and smart tourism: an overview

Smart city attributes and dimensions

Smart cities represent an ICT-innovative movement to optimize resource use and efficiency (Kramersa et al., 2014; Neirotti et al., 2014; de Jong et al., 2015), and precisely, a human-technology urban integration (Calzada and Cobo, 2015; Deakin, 2014; Storper and Scott, 2009). Cohen’s (2014) “Smart City Wheel” and Dameri’s (2014) “land-people-infrastructure-government” model are well-recognized frameworks that provided dimensions of urban smartness. Each of the smart dimensions can be further interpreted and measured by attributes, which can be assessed by local residents and users in cities. The pillars of a successful smart city are a well-established and integrated system of people, technology and processes operating across different aspects of the society, such as architecture and infrastructure, communications, transportation, education, public health and safety, utilities and tourism (Khan et al., 2017). The expected outcome of smartness is the innovative and effective governance and management of cities in all these aspects. Some scholars have thus attempted to summarize the characteristics of a smart city to dimensions like smartness in mobility, government, economy, people, living and environment (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014) such that further discussions can be clearly framed.

These smart city dimensions and attributes also extend to smart tourism in the form of the structure and development of smart destinations, for example, ICT provisions, social media coverage and services for visitors (Wang et al., 2012; Molinillo et al., 2019), infrastructure, environment and people (Anthopoulos, 2015), and a wider consideration of urban governance as a whole (Anthopoulos et al., 2016). As a result, the smart city phenomenon was also explored, described and studied in a number of dimensions (Anthopoulos, 2015; Anthopoulos et al., 2016; Chan and Marafa, 2018; Cheng, 2015; Coca-Stefaniak, 2014; Coca-Stefaniak and Carroll, 2015; Cohen, 2014; Dameri and Rosenthal-Sabroux, 2014; Deakin, 2014; He et al., 2014; ITU, 2014; Qin et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2012) as provided in Table Al. Cohen (2014) and Dameri (2014) proposed the key dimensions of a smart city through their “Smart City Wheel” and “land-people-infrastructure-government” model, respectively, whereas a list of attributes indicated the underlying variables in each dimension (Chan and Marafa, 2018; IESE Center for Globalization and Strategy, 2017). From these multi-dimensional frameworks, it is clear that smartness in places should address interconnected areas of infrastructure, facilities and services, and thus leading to a bottom-up, or a more user- or resident-oriented concept of smart societies (Cifaldi and Serban, 2018; Coyle, 2011).
Connecting the concepts of smart tourism and smart city

Whereas smart tourism development concentrates on a destination’s environment, visitors and tourism industries, these aspects fall within the wider perspective of a smart city. Although tourism development mainly faces visitors and stakeholders in the tourism industries only, smart tourism is a sector that fundamentally shares infrastructure and other smart city functions with private sector, local residents and other users (Errichiello and Marasco, 2017; Li et al., 2017; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015). del Chiappa and Baggio (2015) suggested that smart tourism destinations should be combined network of stakeholders and their technological representations such as tourism-related websites. Such networks often involve collaborations between public authorities and private sector (Errichiello and Marasco, 2017). The knowledge of smart tourism and smart cities has still evolved in separate trajectories where the former area mainly informs how destinations and their actors should become “smarter” and many scholarly studies are scattered across several academic fields such as tourism, urban studies and even technology-related publications. The discussions of smart tourism still fall short in connecting with the pool of literature of smart cities although the two domains were argued to be integrated in the research (Boes et al., 2016).

Some scholars have attempted to examine the conceptualization of smart city development, for example, in the form of an ecosystem approach (Boes et al., 2016; del Chiappa and Baggio, 2015; Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015), levels or layers of ICT infrastructure, physical environment and residents (Anthopoulos, 2015), mobile applications for enhancing visitor experience (Lamsfus, et al., 2015), a data-oriented model (Bellini et al., 2014), and more often, sets of multiple components of smart cities (Glebova et al., 2014; Naphade et al., 2011). The most common aspects of smart city literature have emerged in six categories including facilities (e.g. energy, water, IoT, etc.), services (e.g. health, education, etc.), governance, planning and management, architecture, data and people as revealed by Anthoroulos et al. (2016).

The conceptualization of smart tourism follows a similar multi-dimensional approach but in a different context. For instance, Boes et al. (2016) proposed two fundamental components of smart tourism that consisted of, first, leadership, innovation and social capital, and second, technological applications and ICTs (see also Lamsfus, et al., 2015). Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo (2015) proposed that smart experiences, smart business ecosystems and smart destinations were the three key components of smart tourism, which must be facilitated by the availability, collection and exchange of the processing of data. Koo et al. (2017) elucidated smart tourism as a layered architecture comprising and combining the functions of ICT infrastructure, data, ICT platform, policy and governance, citizens and communities (Coyle, 2011), and travelers. Khan et al. (2017) argued that this smart tourism framework is a holistic extension of the smart city concept with most components identical or overlapping except the different types of visitors and residents involved. The inclusion or emphasis on visitors and their experiences tended to be the divergent aspect between the two concepts (Wang et al., 2013), but there is always a research need to bridge them together in every aspect of the relevant knowledge about destination management such as conceptual foundation, data analysis and tourist behavior (Xiang et al., 2015).

Branding and marketing of smart destinations

In response to entrepreneurial governance and urban boosterism since the 1970s, cities have begun to develop under the huge pressures of resource and capital competition. Tourism is the frontier strategy of sustainable economic and urban development in many cities that are fighting for survival in the globalized era (Fletcher, 2011). Destination branding alongside conventional promotion and marketing are all strategies, which emerged and evolved from the global environment that has started to converge with urban studies (Govers, 2013). Many cities and their DMOs have to create and rely upon specific themes that may also become part of the city brand and which construct some strong or positive characteristics (Chang, 1999; Firat and Ulusoy, 2009; Glaeser, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2006). The resultant city brand may eventually lead to the positive outcomes of new or repeated visitors and even attract or retain them as potential immigrants (Kerr, 2006; Zenker, 2011).
Many cities start their branding by thematization of specific characteristics or experience (Firat and Ulusoy, 2009) such as cultural city, heritage destination, 24-h city, future city, shopping paradise and festival town. The success of city thematization is determined by place characteristics, the realization of its potential and the responses from existing place users such as residents, tourists and other stakeholders as they usually co-produce and co-consume the common resources and infrastructure. Themes can also be socially constructed and transferred to a value-promised and value-laden concept and even city brand although there often exists questionable compatibility and a strong tension between the quest for diversity and the desire for distinctiveness (Chu, 2010; Richards and Wilson, 2006). However, branding of smart destination has two implications. First, the connection between city branding and smart tourist destinations opens up opportunities that allow cities to be more competitive since smartness and innovation can cover a wide range of selective attractions, product and services in tourism industry (Boisen et al., 2011). Second, smart tourism involves three dimensions of features including tourists (travel demand and experience), industry (stakeholders and businesses) and destinations (places and ICT infrastructure) (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014). City branding can therefore play a role in linking up those strong and advantageous aspects to create shared value to visitors, which is both the goals of smart city development (Dameri, 2014; Dameri and Rosenthal-Sabroux, 2014) and place branding (Hankinson, 2010; Kerr, 2006).

The process of destination branding involves multiple stakeholders beyond the tourism industry (Errichiello and Marasco, 2017; Hankinson, 2010), and their governance (Pulido-Fernández and Pulido-Fernández, 2019). This circumstance also applies to smart destination branding where the government or the DMOs need to understand how visitors perceive the characteristics of the destination and precisely, the attributes of the smartness of the city. The role of DMOs is considered a unique agency to connect tourist market research with smart destination-related public policy (Gretzel et al., 2016).

Smart tourism, however, is not a traditional theme of destinations in the way that culture, heritage, nightlife, entertainment or others that clearly focus on visitors can be. Smart tourism provides an improved, innovative and effective interface between visitors and destinations (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Koo et al., 2015; Xiang et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2012). The development of online sources of information, social media and user-generated content plays an important influence in tourists’ perception and expectation of destinations (Marchiori and Cantoni, 2015; Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé, 2015). The share of infrastructure and other resources within a smart city therefore benefits the experiences and the quality of life of both locals and visitors (Wang et al., 2013). From a visitor perspective, whether or not a smart city brand can gain visitor satisfaction, and long-term economic and socio-cultural benefits largely depend on which smart city attributes are perceived by visitors to be important (Gibbs et al., 2013).

There are still limited academic discussions and empirical cases to connect smart tourism with destination branding, although several researchers have attempted to investigate the brand equity of a smart city (Chan, 2019) and smart urban development for urban sustainability (Chan and Marafa, 2018; Coca-Stefaniak, 2014; Vanolo, 2014). These studies have therefore shown a knowledge gap that calls to extend the concept of smart tourism from a purely or mostly technological side to a more social science perspective (Gretzel, 2011).

Methodology

Study area

Hong Kong carries an overarching city brand of “Asia’s World City” (ISD, The HKSAR Government, 2013). Although “innovative” is one of the five core values of the Hong Kong brand, neither being a smart city nor having smart tourism has yet appeared in the brand values or attributes. Nevertheless, the Hong Kong Government has already initiated a strategic policy review and consultation for smart city development over the last two years (OGCIO, 2016). The relatively recent report indicated that one of the proposed smart initiatives is to develop smart tourism through a number of short-term, medium-term and long-term actions (PwC, 2017). In a separate policy domain, Tourism Commission also highlighted smart tourism development as
one of the strategies in the recent Development Blueprint for Hong Kong’s Tourism Industry (Tourism Commission, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, 2017).

Research design and methods

This study took a sample of inbound visitors (n = 205) from Hong Kong and applied a questionnaire-based survey on visitors’ perceptions of these smart city attributes, which were collected from literature (e.g. Qin et al., 2010; Dameri and Rosenthal-Sabroux, 2014), and framed in Cohen’s (2013) Smart City Wheel, as shown in Table AI. The attributes measured were in the form of a list of bilingual (in English and Chinese) seven-point Likert statements on these attributes, randomly allocated on one section in the questionnaire. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The respondents were requested to rate the statement according to the perceived level of importance for each attribute, based on their feeling and experience in Hong Kong. This implied that they were able to provide ratings regardless of their length of stay, but the respondents were allowed to skip statements for which they did not have any feeling or experience. Finally, socio-demographic data (gender, age, educational level, working status and monthly personal income) and visit characteristics (purpose of visit, number of time of visit and place of origin) were also collected.

Data collection was performed by trained research assistants who conducted questionnaire-based survey in the two top visitor attractions in Hong Kong, the Peak and Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade in January to March 2016. Cluster random sampling was used because the samples in each site were considered heterogeneous in nature and no selective influence of particular visitor segment like family visitors in theme parks. The research assistants distributed 300 questionnaires and collected 205 completed responses, which constituted a response rate of approximately 68 percent.

The socio-demographic and visitation characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table I. Excluding the missing answers, the sample has more female respondents (49 vs 37 percent male). The majority of the samples range in age between 20 and 39 (nearly 70 percent), although over 20 percent are aged over 40 years old. The respondents mostly have a high education level of university or above (over 60 percent) and nearly 30 percent are educated to a secondary level. Most of the respondents are employed (about 70 percent) and have a personal monthly income of HK$20,000 or less (about 60 percent). The respondents mainly visited Hong Kong for vacation (62 percent). Whereas more than one-third have visited Hong Kong two or three times, about 28 percent are first-time visitors and another 29 percent are frequent (more than five times) visitors. A majority of the visitors come from Mainland China (38 percent) and other parts of Asia (38 percent).

This study first applied descriptive statistics to elucidate the mean scores and ranking of the smart city attributes rated by respondent visitors. Following previous studies of place branding (e.g. Xiao and Smith, 2006; Merriees et al., 2009), explanatory factor analysis was then used as an appropriate method to identify the specific factors associated with the visitors’ perceptions of smart attributes, which was regarded as the structure of smart destinations in Hong Kong. This study used the principal axis factoring method (Sparks, 2007) to avoid the normality assumption (Fabrigar et al., 1999), and varimax rotation to maximize the variance of the squared loadings of a factor so that a clear classification could be obtained for interpretation (Beerli and Martin, 2004). The factor analysis followed the Kaiser–Guttman rule to extract factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, considered elements with a loading > 0.5 (Lee and Crompton, 1992) and eliminated those attributes that have more than one factor with a > 0.4 factor loading (Sparks, 2007). Finally, linear regression was applied to verify the presence of a relationship between the smart city factors and the willingness of visitors to consider migrating to Hong Kong if the city is branded as a smart city (Chan and Marafa, 2016a). The whole set of analysis offers findings to inform the DMOs about the development of smart destination brand.

Results

Table II shows visitors’ ratings of the smart city attributes. The Kurtosis values among the attributes ranged between −0.752 and 1.732, which are considered acceptable to prove
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Characteristics of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary or below</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary or post-secondary</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or above</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly personal income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below HK$10,000 or US$1,280</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK$10,001–20,000 or US$1,281–2,560</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK$20,001–30,000 or US$2,561–3,840</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK$30,000–40,000 or US$3,841–5,120</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK$40,000–50,000 or US$5,121–6,410</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK$50,001 or US$6,411 or above</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business or meetings</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit relatives or friends</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of time of visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
normal univariate distribution (Trochim and Donnelly, 2006; Gravetter and Wallnau, 2014). The percentage of missing data across all the attributes range from 1.0 to 7.8 percent (the highest value is 8.3 percent for “smart development of manufacturing sectors”), indicating that the respondents are largely able to answer their perceived importance level of the attributes. The average levels of importance of smart city attributes have an overall mean score of 5.37 out of 7.00 and all items ranged between 4.91 and 5.74, which tend to be relatively high. On the one hand, the item with the highest mean score is “physical safety” (m = 5.74), followed by “quality of life” (m = 5.68) and “employment opportunities” (m = 5.67), which are attributes relevant to the general livelihood of residents. On the other hand, the lowest rated items include “smart development of manufacturing sectors” (m = 4.91), “energy use efficiency of buildings” (m = 5.04) and “overall city governance toward a smart city” (m = 5.06).

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia (except Mainland China)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 205

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Ratings of smart city attributes perceived by visitors in Hong Kong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Mean (rank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Smart city leads overall economic development</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Standard of living</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality of life</td>
<td>5.68 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Employment opportunities</td>
<td>5.67 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Urban environmental quality</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CO2 emission as a smart city</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attitudes of citizens toward smart city</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ICT-related education opportunities for citizens</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Quality of individual citizens in ICT knowledge</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Quality of local communities</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Quality of government</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Quality of universities</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Quality of business sector</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Energy use efficiency in the city</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Use of renewable energy</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Energy use efficiency of buildings</td>
<td>5.04 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Internet and telecommunication connection</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. General condition of residence</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Smart transport services</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Smart development of manufacturing sectors</td>
<td>4.91 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Water supply</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Overall city governance toward a smart city</td>
<td>5.06 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Government as smart city initiator</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Provision of public services</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Public and private medical care</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Consensus among stakeholders</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Social welfare</td>
<td>5.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Physical safety</td>
<td>5.74 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Smart city structure perceived by visitors in Hong Kong**

Prior to the operation of factor analysis, the tests for reliability of responses and the appropriateness of factor analysis received high scores of Cronbach’s $\alpha$ of 0.950, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measures of sampling of 0.918, and a significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < 0.00$). These results all support a significantly high level of data reliability (Kline, 2000), show an excellent internal consistency along the responses (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) and sustain the applicability of factor analysis for the research (Lee and Crompton, 1992).

The factor analysis extracted four factors from the list of smart city attributes as presented in Table III. These factors show distinctive characteristics of a perceived smart city that include factors of “quality stakeholders of smart society” (denoting the quality of different sectors and key players of smart urban development, and a well-educated population for an ICT-related aspect), “energy consumption in urban environment” (relating to the use of energy and its impact on urban environment), “smart city governance” (particularly focusing on the role of government in smart development) and finally “smart city livelihood” (simply indicating the provision of social welfare and public safety of the city). On the whole, the factors represented approximately 56 percent of the total variance of the analysis.

**Willingness to migrate to Hong Kong under smart place brand**

Since a smart destination brand is not a conventional tourism brand but should embrace a broader locational implication that aims to attract repeated visitors (Kerr, 2006), and ultimately target immigrants for residency (Chan and Marafa, 2016a). A regression analysis was performed to identify which of the smart city factors may be more likely to determine a relocation decision by visitors. The satisfactory overall and factorial Cronbach’s $\alpha$ also give way to an assessment of the effects of the smart city factors (independent variables based on aggregated mean scores of each factor) on the willingness of visitors to move to a “smarter” Hong Kong (dependent variable). This dependent variable is measured by a Likert statement on the level of willingness to migrate to Hong Kong under smart place brand.

---

**Table III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality stakeholders of smart society</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Cumulative % of variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of individual citizens in ICT knowledge</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>17.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of government</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT-related education opportunities for citizens</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of local communities</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of universities</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of business sector</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.576</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy consumption in urban environment</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of renewable energy</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy use efficiency of buildings</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.684</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon dioxide emission as a smart city</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy use efficiency in the city</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban environmental quality</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart city governance</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government as smart city initiative</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall city governance towards a smart city</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of public services</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart development of manufacturing sector</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart city livelihood</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical safety</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Overall Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.950$; Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy = 0.918; Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p = 0.000$). Extraction method: principal axis factoring. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization. Eigenvalue of each factor > 1; factor loading of each element > 0.5. Attributes loading on more than one factor with a loading score of $\geq 0.4$ on each factor eliminated.
Hong Kong if the city is branded as a smart city (Table IV). The whole set of the four smart city factors was then entered into regression models to study their respective determinants in the visitors’ perceptions of migration to Hong Kong. The stepwise method was adopted to receive a relatively higher explanatory power than other methods. All variance inflation factors are less than 3 (ranged between 1.683 and 1.883), which are below the critical value of multicollinearity (Fox, 1997).

The results of the regression analysis testing the model of smart city factors are presented in Table IV. The overall fit of the models is low with adjusted $R^2$ of 0.049. The smart city model is statistically significant to explain the perceived determinants of the willingness to migrate to Hong Kong when the city is branded for smartness. In the smart city model, the respondents considered two significant determinants, namely, “quality stakeholders of smart society” (Factor 1) and “energy consumption in urban environment” (Factor 2) of migrating to smart-branded Hong Kong. The two significant determinants show a similar magnitude of effect but an opposite direction. Quality of a smart society has a weak and negative ($b = -0.219$) influence, while the energy consumption aspect possesses a weak but positive relationship ($b = 0.234$) with the willingness to migrate, respectively.

**Discussions**

The factor analysis in Table III shows four aspects of a smart city that visitors considered to be important and associated with their perception of a successful smart city. These aspects represent the distinctive dimensions that consist of both physical or clear-cut infrastructure (energy consumption in urban environment) and specific intangible areas (e.g., quality stakeholders of smart society, smart city governance and smart livelihood). The findings imply that visitors perceive that a smart city should provide fundamental characteristics that support people’s living and that “soft” attributes such as public services and welfare, governance and policy aspect, and quality of people and other actors in the society must be clear. Boes et al. (2016) described this “hard and soft smartness” as an advantage for smart destination development as this hard and soft smartness provides an “ecosystem structure (that) holds the potential for sustained competitive advantage and enhancement of quality of life of both residents and visitors in smart tourism destinations” (p. 150). It is therefore reflected in the “quality” of local actors and industries, especially the local populations with widespread ICT education and knowledge. In addition to the technological or hard smartness, Boes et al. (2016) discovered four soft smartness components, namely, innovation, social capital, human capital and leadership.

Table V compares the visitor-perceived smart city factors with the components revealed in other studies. The findings suggest that a smart environment (infrastructure, ICT, etc.), smart people (participation, knowledge, etc.), smart living (innovation) and smart governance (collaboration, governmental effort, etc.) are the predominant common dimensions of a smart city shared across studies. There were some other essential attributes contributing to a smart city such as transportation, data and economic development, but these elements are not significantly associated with the image of a smart destination by visitors in Hong Kong in this study. The previous studies presented by Boes et al. (2016) were not tourism oriented but examined users and actors of smart cities as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table IV</th>
<th>Regression of smart city factors as determinants of immigration perceived by visitors in Hong Kong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider migrating to Hong Kong if branded as a smart city (coefficient (t-value))</td>
<td>6.335 (6.427)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant term</td>
<td>-0.219 (-2.163)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: quality stakeholders of smart society</td>
<td>0.234 (2.188)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: energy consumption in urban environment</td>
<td>0.049 ($F = 3.009$)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: t-Values in parentheses (independent variables exhibiting t-values < 1.0 are excluded).

*,**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 level (two-tailed)
In this regard, the branding of a smart destination should consider these “apparent” smart dimensions that tend to attract visitors’ attention as these dimensions are well recognized and associated by visitors with being a smart city. The relative levels of importance of each attribute should also be studied as destination branding needs to highlight the strong place characteristics and cover the weaknesses (Parkerson and Saunders, 2005).

The regression analysis in Table IV also reveals the determinants of how visitors might be attracted to migrate to Hong Kong when it carries a smart city brand. The two opposite coefficients show that visitors are more willing to migrate to Hong Kong with a smarter condition of energy consumption in an urban environment but might be reluctant to move if the quality of a smart society is increased. Although the latter circumstance is hard to explain, two possible reasons of such negative relation are, first, the expected competition and cost of living, and second, the lack of understanding and knowledge about the city by the respondents. The inclusion of the energy factor indicates that the responded visitors were concerned about the environmental quality caused by energy consumption and that for their perception of smart branding and the willingness to immigrate, efficiency led to respondents’ perception of a smarter city. This finding also substantiates the presence of an overlap between green and smart urban development as found in some earlier studies (Chan and Marafa, 2018; Luvisi and Lorenzini, 2014; Ferrara, 2015).

### Table V: Categorization of smart city components into dimensions and comparison between studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smart city dimensions (Cohen, 2014)</th>
<th>Smart economic development</th>
<th>Smart environment</th>
<th>Smart people</th>
<th>Smart living</th>
<th>Smart mobility</th>
<th>Smart governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brinkman (2011) (Amsterdam)</td>
<td>Economic viability</td>
<td>Technological push and pull</td>
<td>Research and knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Collective effort; cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSMA (2012) (Helsinki)</td>
<td>Competition to drive innovation; inclusion of SMEs</td>
<td>Open data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mobile clusters</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakici et al. (2013) (Barcelona)</td>
<td>Smart district; open data; infrastructure (physical and technological)</td>
<td>Smart district; open data; infrastructure (physical and technological)</td>
<td>New services for citizens</td>
<td>Living Labs</td>
<td>Management of smart city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron (2013) (Amsterdam)</td>
<td>Open data; organic ecosystem; technological infrastructure</td>
<td>Citizen participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiiekema and Hongisto (2013)</td>
<td>Technology; open data</td>
<td>Skilled workforce</td>
<td>Innovation; Living Labs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration; active government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dameri (2014) (Amsterdam)</td>
<td>Technological infrastructure</td>
<td>Virtual community and involvement of people</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration; government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum Virium Helsinki (2014)</td>
<td>Open and transparent data; ICT infrastructure</td>
<td>Talented people (Open) innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration and harmonization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSMA (2012) (Barcelona)</td>
<td>Open data</td>
<td>Innovation and citizen participation</td>
<td>Understanding behavior; testing innovations in Living Labs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vision (IT integration), collaboration, organization (top-down governance)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>van Veen (2014) (Amsterdam)</td>
<td>Open infrastructure; open data</td>
<td>Open innovation; open knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective approach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The current study (2017) (Hong Kong)</td>
<td>Energy consumption in urban environment</td>
<td>Quality stakeholders of smart society</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smart city livelihood</td>
<td>Smart city governance</td>
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Source: Adopted from Boes et al. (2016)
The explanatory power of the regression analysis is weak and the two determining factors also carry a weak correlation with coefficients of about 0.2. The less powerful model suggests the existence of non-specified factors (e.g. socio-political) in the locational decision. Multi- and inter-disciplinary criteria and overlapping attributes to interpret and determine the nature of a smart city, and its resultant city brand would complicate the concept (Nijkamp, 2014). The factor analysis showed four dimensions of smartness as perceived by visitors to Hong Kong, but only two of these dimensions have determined these visitors’ connection between smart branding and their eventual decision for residency. There is a huge gap between visitors’ expectations of a smart destination and a smart city. The lack of sufficient knowledge or experience about Hong Kong as a smart destination and a smart city, as well as the elements of smartness in the current city brand might have mixed up visitors’ perceptions of smart attributes. This phenomenon was also observed among local perceptions of a smart city and sustainable urban development (Ahvenniemi et al., 2017; Chan and Marafa, 2016a, b; Merrilees et al., 2009).

**Conclusion**

Smart urban development and tourism development have increasingly become inseparable, especially when visitors utilize cities as tourist destinations but share other urban resources and spaces with local citizens (Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015, 2016). Unlike the development of smart tourist attractions, smart tourist destinations should have a wider scope of smartness. A smart tourist destination may carry similar and overlapping characteristics as smart cities, which may be interpreted by visitors and may eventually affect their perceived image of a city (Khan et al., 2017), as well as their willingness to immigrate and locational decisions (Chan and Marafa, 2016a; Zenker, 2011). This paper studied the perception of smart city attributes by inbound visitors in Hong Kong. The smart city attributes receiving the highest level of importance are related to necessary livelihood conditions, for example, physical safety, quality of life and employment opportunities, rather than the specific characteristics of smart infrastructure or governance.

A four-factor structure of a smart city was identified, which covers smartness-related areas of the quality of different actors in the society: energy consumption, urban governance and residents’ livelihood. The smartness factors represent the important dimensions of urban smartness as the prioritized areas of further development, innovation and marketing of the tourism industry and enterprises in Hong Kong, as a mature urban destination incorporating the branding of a proposed smart district as a strategy of urban development. Among the four factors, only the quality stakeholders of smart society and energy consumption were confirmed as significant determinants of willingness to migrate to Hong Kong if the city carries a smart city brand. However, governance and management should not be neglected in smart destinations, especially when decision makers have to deal with multiple stakeholders in tourism industry and smart urban development (Pulido-Fernández and Pulido-Fernández, 2019).

The specific characteristics such as ICT provision, data and infrastructure and transportation are surprisingly excluded. These attributes are not considered to be unimportant, but the knowledge gap of visitors to local conditions and characteristics might have caused this “simplicity” of a smart city structure. As discovered by Molinillo et al. (2019), for example, smart cities are sometimes incapable of relating their smart characteristics to their place image and branding. There appears to be a paradoxical situation where such a “simple” perception of a smart city and the factors determining the willingness to immigrate indeed represents the “complexity” for decision makers, particular in attracting and pushing inbound visitors beyond a brand of tourist destination into a place of residence (Zenker and Beckmann, 2013), and to plan and develop smart cities for various types of land, resources and users (Angelidou, 2014). Decision makers of tourism development or DMOs should therefore address this issue through understanding and bridging a knowledge-perception gap of smart urban development. It is important to better connect the expectations and requirements of smart destinations and (some of the more tourism oriented and relevant dimensions) smart cities.

Since smart city and smart destination integrate both areas of knowledge including the respective key dimensions of smartness. It may not be realistic to rely on researcher or expert opinion only to
select the dimensions in smart destination development, management and branding. There may be alternative approaches to depict or elucidate the more significant areas of smartness in tourism industry that do not arguably cover some of the smart city concept (e.g. economic development, employment opportunities, education opportunities, quality of government, of universities, of business sector, development of manufacturing sectors, consensus of stakeholders, etc.). However, this study takes a tourist perspective that constitutes and represents partially a bottom-up approach of understanding smart destination and its branding, which is an essentially appropriate way of place/destination branding suggested in the literature of branding (Boison et al., 2018), resilient community development (Coyle, 2011) and smart societies Cifaldi and Serban, 2018).

The major limitation of this study is the low explanatory power of the regression analysis, which causes a weakened ability to examine similar conditions in other cases. This shortcoming is indeed caused by the inherent lack of knowledge about Hong Kong by visitors who only stayed temporarily and their perceptions might have also been distorted or affected by other sources of information about Hong Kong as an urban tourist destination. This problem also limits the ability to extend the analysis further to incorporate the level of performance of smart city attributes. Furthermore, more academic research requires to contribute to more specialized bibliography and a methodology adapted to a case similar to the current study. The direct adaptation of smart city attributes to smart tourist destinations may not be an appropriate strategy in many situations. Nevertheless, this study acts as an initiative to start with an understanding of what and how tourists have considered, perceived and interpreted their dimensions of a smart tourism destination. The results draw to more opportunities for deepen the knowledge about specific dimensions of smart city that can contribute to the development and sustainability of a smart tourist destination, especially to close some knowledge gaps through the creation of more specialized bibliography and a methodology adapted to a case similar to the current study.

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Further reading

### Table AI  Aspects of smart city research and discussions

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<th>Smart dimension</th>
<th>Smart city attributes</th>
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<tr>
<td>The overall economic development is based on a smart city initiative</td>
<td>2. Standard of living</td>
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<td>3. Employment opportunities</td>
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<td>4. Smart development of manufacturing sectors</td>
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<td>Land (smart environment)</td>
<td>5. Quality of life</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6. Urban environmental quality</td>
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<td>7. CO₂ emission as a smart city</td>
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<td>People (smart people)</td>
<td>8. Attitudes of citizens toward smart city</td>
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<td>Citizens seen like targets for the smart initiatives</td>
<td>9. Quality of individual citizens in ICT knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects involved are local and central governments, universities, businesses</td>
<td>10. ICT-related education opportunities for citizens</td>
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<td>11. Quality of local communities</td>
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<td>14. Quality of business sector</td>
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<td>Infrastructure (smart living)</td>
<td>15. Energy use efficiency in the city</td>
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<td>Better use of energy</td>
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<td>Renewal energy source</td>
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<td>Buildings efficiency</td>
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<td>Efficient services (like transport) (smart mobility)</td>
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<td>Government (smart governance)</td>
<td>22. Overall city governance toward a smart city</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defines the rules and priorities for smart initiatives</td>
<td>23. Government as smart city initiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is itself the owner of smart processes</td>
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<td>Gains efficiency and effectiveness in delivering smarter public services</td>
<td>25. Public and private medical care</td>
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<td>26. Consensus among stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gains consensus thanks to the better quality of life</td>
<td>27. Social welfare</td>
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<td>28. Physical safety</td>
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Source: Chan and Marafa (2018)
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Strategies and measures directed towards overtourism: a perspective of European DMOs

Christian Eckert, Daniel Zacher, Harald Pechlaner, Philipp Namberger and Jürgen Schmude

Abstract

Purpose – Due to both the new quality and intensity overtourism discussions have received, it is time to examine the question concerning the consequences this development has on destination level and how destinations can adjust their strategies for future development. This is especially important to consider, since overtourism can be seen as a fundamental issue for tourism development. First measures taken within destinations show that reactions are taking place, e.g. through access restrictions of frequently visited places. The purpose of this paper is to identify future-oriented strategies and to derive concrete measures in order to deal with overtourism on a destination level.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 19 qualitative interviews with European destination managers were conducted and evaluated via the qualitative analysis method GABEK® with WinRelan® software.

Findings – The results show that various stakeholders are involved in overtourism, with the destination management organization being the central actor to deal with issues. It is challenging to choose between different strategies and measures, which always have to be considered in relation to the specific conditions of a destination and the perception level of overtourism. In order to face current developments, the initiation of a stakeholder dialog can be seen as a promising factor, but also as a challenging task.

Originality/value – Currently, a “wait-and-see-attitude” exists, where well-known destinations are cited as negative examples, but a serious examination related to one’s own destination has not yet been developed. This consideration should be seen as a prerequisite for future-oriented destination development, which takes the local population into account.

Keywords Carrying capacity, Measures, Strategies, DMO, Overtourism, Destination development

1. Introduction

The last decades have been marked by far-reaching political, economic, ecological and social transformation processes which, due to the rapid development of information and communication (I&C) technologies and mobility behavior, can no longer be limited to isolated regional contexts (Barca et al., 2012; Yeung, 2015). Tourism is a good example of this development and continuous growth rates can be stated around the globe. If destinations follow the strategy of internationalization, the tourism industry is put in the comfortable position of being able to expect and plan for an almost never-ending stream of guests from all over the world. This is especially true for urban destinations, where quantitative tourism development is becoming a matter of course (Mordue, 2017). Looking at the individual guest, a somewhat more differentiated picture emerges. Even if the international guest is hardly to be generalized due to his respective cultural background and different travel experiences, there are overarching trends already shaping tourism development today and which will continue to do so in the future. The following developments are briefly mentioned here:

- The future guest is multioptional (Barr et al., 2010) and looking for a diversity of experiences within a short period of time. At the same time, he/she is aware of the variety of possibilities. The search for orientation, meaning and uniqueness is a probable reaction to these developments.

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A down-to-earth experience with contact with the locals and a holistic understanding of the tourist destination beyond the pure tourist products, with a consideration of local economic and community questions, is demanded more and more (Engeset and Elvekrok, 2015).

This is happening at a time when destination management organizations (DMOs) are faced with the challenge of orchestrating the interaction between guests and locals in a new way against the background of the overtourism discussion taking place at the moment (Martín et al., 2018; Seraphin et al., 2018). Well-known European examples of negative effects due to continued quantitative growth include cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon and Prague (Koens et al., 2018; Milano, 2017; Novy and Colomb, 2016), to name just a few destinations which seem to face issues related to overtourism. Within this, consequences on a local level are for example a lack in affordable housing due to online accommodation services, reached capacities of infrastructure and an increased immersion of tourism into the everyday life of the locals. The underlying dissatisfaction with tourism is not only felt by the locals, but increasingly also by the guests. Even though such phenomena are not basically new and negative consequences resulting from tourism have already been discussed in the past, overtourism under this term “has come to prominence as one of the most discussed issues with regards to tourism in popular media and, increasingly, academia” since 2016 (Koens et al., 2018, p. 1). In this paper, overtourism is understood as follows: “Overtourism describes destinations where hosts or guests, locals or visitors, feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably” (Goodwin, 2017). In this area of tension, DMOs are not so much lobbyists and advocates of the tourism industry, but are rather active designers and accelerators of sustainable regional development, with far-reaching consequences for their future task portfolio.

In order to depict the status quo of this discussion at the destination level and to formulate coping strategies, an empirical study with urban and rural DMOs in Europe was conducted during the course of this study. The specific research question is:

RQ1. How is the overtourism discussion currently perceived in the destinations, what needs for action should be formulated and, subsequently, what competencies should be developed?

First, the above-mentioned aspects are explained from a theoretical perspective and the current state of research is depicted. Then, in the course of the presentation of the research design, the results of the empirical study are displayed. In the concluding discussion, the implications of the results are presented and a special focus is placed on the implementation of the change process.

2. Destination development in times of overtourism

2.1 Carrying capacity of tourism destinations

Literature has been dealing with tourism flows and their impact on society and ecology for quite some time, but only recently under the term overtourism. At the start of the debate were concepts such as Soft Tourism (Krippendorf, 1982) and later Sustainable Tourism (Cooper, 1993), which have already taken up many of the theoretical, methodological as well as practical aspects currently discussed relating to the term overtourism. With an increase in the numbers of tourists and the negative effects associated with this, O’Reilly (1986, p. 254) was the first to define Tourism Capacity: “Indeed, tourism capacity can be simplistically defined as the maximum number of tourists that can be contained in a certain destination area.”

The general concept of carrying capacity has its origin in the considerations of range and wildlife management and is based on the assumption that an organism can only survive under certain physical conditions. Common to the numerous definitions of tourism carrying capacity is the maximum level of use of space to a point at which conditions deteriorate (McCool and Lime, 2001). While many authors (McIntyre et al., 1993; Wahab and Pigram, 1997) define this point as a singular number, McCool and Lime (2001, p. 381), however, argue that defining “carrying capacity in terms that are essentially numeric is not only unrealistic, but inappropriate. The important point […] is that
tourism development [...] represents a set of tradeoffs." Swarbrooke (1999) subdivides the concept of tourism carrying capacity into the following components, thus dissolving the limitation to one single carrying capacity:

- physical carrying capacity describes the number of tourists a space can hold in real terms;
- ecological carrying capacity is the number of tourists a space can hold without damaging the environment or ecosystem;
- economic carrying capacity refers to a certain number of tourists, above which the economic damage (e.g. increased land and property prices) is no longer acceptable from the population’s perspective;
- infrastructural carrying capacity describes the number of tourists that can be accommodated by the prevailing infrastructure;
- social carrying capacity refers to the number of tourists above which the social and cultural changes caused by tourism are no longer acceptable to the population; and
- perceptual sustainability is defined by the maximum number of tourists, above which the quality of the tourist experience suffers.

In addition to the importance of carrying capacity analyses, Swarbrooke (1999) also concedes a high degree of subjectivity in practical implementation. In terms of time, it seems crucial to consider the tourist carrying capacity against the background of the destination’s position in its life cycle. The conceptual interaction of tourism carrying capacity and destination life cycle “is dynamic, with the idea of change implicit in both concepts” (Martin and Uysal, 1990, p. 329). Spatially, carrying capacity analyses are not limited to urban or regional destinations, but can also be applied to whole countries, even though this makes it imperative to adapt the survey instruments (McCool and Lime, 2001). In addition to scale, the issues with regard to carrying capacity differ between different types of destinations, which can be seen in carrying capacity analyses of islands (Bera et al., 2015), cities (Rahmani et al., 2015; Seraphin et al., 2018) or rural destinations (Ezeuduji, 2015).

In the end – and above all – it seems essential to find compromises in the calculation of the tourism carrying capacity. The well-known example of an economic upswing (e.g. positive employment and income effects) coinciding with ecological pollution (e.g. air and water pollution) indicates the complexity of tourism development. Weighing and adjusting competing influencing factors ultimately only happens up to the point at which those affected and/or the decision makers do not (want to) find further compromises or accept any further negative influences (Cole and Stankey, 1997). Against this background, the qualitative assessment of the socio-cultural carrying capacity seems promising, as long as it is preceded by a well-balanced selection procedure of all those affected by tourism.

Particularly against the background of sustainable development, the methodology of the socio-cultural carrying capacity value stretch (CCVS) model according to Mansfeld and Jonas (2006) and its further development according to Namberger (2010) seems – from a scientific point of view – promising. Mansfeld and Jonas (2006) calculate the socio-cultural carrying capacity of rural tourist communities using the example of the Kibbutz Yiron in northern Israel with their model of a (socio-cultural) CCVS. Against the background of further tourism development in the destination, the model examines the perception of various influencing variables from the perspective of all actors in the destination, i.e. actors who profit from tourism – directly or indirectly – and also the population that at first glance has nothing to do with tourism. In a workshop, the individual views of all people (a selection of about ten people representing different interests as well as varying degrees of dependency on tourism) will first of all be determined with regard to the following three situation complexes: future fears, status quo (negative and positive aspects) and future hopes.

The results allow for a first qualitative insight regarding the participants’ ideas of the (further) development of tourism. Subsequently, individual views are discussed within the group – in order to prevent possible misunderstandings – and, in a further step, summarized before each of the participants weighs these summarized statements according to a given point system. As such,
the participants’ specific fears or hopes of high importance in general are revealed. On the other hand, an analysis of the differences between fears, hopes and the status quo (positive as well as negative aspects) reveals possible discrepancies with regard to future tourism development.

Namberger’s (2010) further development of the CCVS model of Mansfeld and Jonas (2006) can be seen – among others – in the spatial comparison of two research areas (the municipalities of Deshaies and Sainte-Anne, both located on the island of Guadeloupe, which differ greatly in their tourist development and structure) and the respective selection of the actors involved, the practical implementation of the survey by e-mail and the modified analysis of the results: e.g. absolute scoring is "translated" into relative scoring and the variation coefficient is introduced for the valid measurement of the participants’ agreement on certain aspects of content.

2.2 The role of destination management organizations

The issue of carrying capacity has always remained relevant, most recently in the context of sustainable tourism (Coccossis and Mexa, 2017), and, as mentioned before, can also be seen in relation to overtourism – and vice versa (Seraphin et al., 2018, p. 375). Generally, carrying capacity analyses are to be seen as negotiation processes in which all interests within the destination are to be taken into account. Even though other actors are important as well, DMOs can be regarded as the crucial actor in this field, since they have not only to identify, but also to bring together all actors affected by tourism within a destination in a harmonious way (Atorough and Martin, 2012; Flagestad and Hope, 2001; Holešinská, 2013; Paraskevas and Arendell, 2007). Generally speaking, “a DMO is responsible for strategic leadership as well as for the task of ensuring collective agency toward shared goals among the various service providers and stakeholders” (Pechlaner et al., 2019, p. 5) within a destination (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Flagestad and Hope, 2001; Sainaghi, 2006).

More specifically, DMOs require certain tasks and functions in order to shape and manage destination development. These range from classical marketing, branding and positioning functions (Aleksandrov, 2014; Blain et al., 2005) to the establishment and coordination of relationships among stakeholders in the destination (Novotna and Černíková, 2017; Waligo et al., 2013), as well as the development of destination-specific products and/or activities (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Volgger and Pechlaner, 2014). Against the background of mid- and long-term planning, another task is to formulate, monitor and evaluate a strategy for destination development (Pechlaner et al., 2011). From a sustainability-oriented perspective, resource stewardship and the development of a so-called “caring mentality” (Crouch, 2007, p. 31) also has to be taken into account, in order to preserve ecological, social and cultural resources. Since knowledge is a central aspect within destination development, which therefore needs to be expanded and strengthened, human resource development can be seen as a further DMO-task (Pechlaner et al., 2019). In terms of individual target groups, visitor management has also to be mentioned, as well as the goal to enhance the well-being of residents in the destination due to tourism impacts (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007; Pearce, 2015) Figure 1.

According to the DMO-functions presented above, it subsequently seems necessary to identify, check and, if needed, weigh key performance indicators (KPIs) in order to draw the right conclusions for sound future destination development, as well as to measure a DMO’s success. In addition to the numbers of visitors or overnight stays within a destination (Garcia et al., 2017), established and widely accepted KPIs can also be found in the fields of advertising awareness and impact, response levels and cost per use, conversion of enquiries to customers and return on investment. Nevertheless, it must be stated that at the destination level, such traditional KPIs have been somehow called into question in the recent past (Morgan et al., 2012). Rather it is argued that long-term success is based more and more on functioning partnerships and relations between tourists, the local society, politics and companies (Morgan, 2012; Sharples, 2014). Therefore, competitiveness and success of destinations are increasingly based on inclusion and stewardship (Morgan, 2012).

In the specific context of overtourism, especially the involvement of the local society seems to play an important role, since residents, who are informed about and involved in tourism development, have a more positive perception of tourism than those who are less informed and involved.
Therefore, enhancing the well-being of destination residents and – in consequence – avoiding a decline in hospitality can be seen as the most crucial task for DMOs in times of overtourism, since, in the end, the success of tourism depends on the hospitality of local residents (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Bimonte and Punzo, 2016; Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018).

2.3 Overtourism in relation to a destination’s life cycle

As the previous remarks have already shown, tourism carrying capacity has to be considered against the background of a destination’s position in its life cycle, given the dynamic interaction of the two concepts (Martin and Uysal, 1990). Taking this into account, overtourism seems to be a phenomenon in – at least quantitatively – well-developed destinations. According to the initial ideas of Butler (1980), destinations are situated in a certain life cycle (see Figure 2), whereby an initial invention and exploration stage is followed by a certain development of tourism within the destination. In the course of this development, the number of visitors increases steadily, with the destination reaching a critical range at a certain point with regard to the available capacities. Next to a stagnation in visitor numbers, further possible scenarios within this range are a decline in tourism numbers, or, in the case of a destination’s rejuvenation, a further numeric growth.

A closer look at Butler’s (1980) considerations reveals that destinations with successful development and high attractiveness may appeal “large numbers of tourists, giving rise to crowding phenomena” (Neuts and Nijkamp, 2012, p. 2,134). Due to the fact that increasing numbers of tourists can generate problems within local communities (Km et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2018), successful destinations seem to be threatened with overtourism if they continue to grow and reach a critical capacity range (Joppe, 2018). In this field, an increasingly vocal call to deal with tourism growth (Koens et al., 2018) confronts DMOs with a certain pressure to act (Keil et al., 2017).

Since today’s tourism KPIs are more than just a mere quantitative determination, instead of solely marketing a destination, DMOs are faced more and more with issues of managing visitor growth, thinking about paths for future development, developing suitable strategies and, as a result, expedient measures, in times when capacity limits have been reached (Cardoso and Silva, 2018; Postma and Schmuecker, 2017; UNWTO, 2018). This seems to be especially true for developed destinations that have reached a critical range of capacity elements. In consequence, relevant

![Figure 1: Functions of destination management organizations](image)

(Source: Pechlaner et al. (2019))
action can be seen not only as important in order to guarantee the well-being for the local population, but also with regard to the improvement of the overall tourism experience (Costa et al., 2018). In order to enable an identification and deeper discussion concerning the need for action within the framework of this paper, the following chapter deals with the methodological setting of the research carried out.

3. Methodology

To reach the aim of this research and due to its rather explorative character, a qualitative approach consisting of a total number of 19 guided and deliberately open interviews was chosen (see Figure 3). With regard to the selection of the interview partners, care was taken to conduct interviews with both urban and rural destination managers within Europe, in whose areas of responsibility a high level of tourism intensity can be identified. Although a tendency can be recognized that overtourism seems to be present especially in destinations with a particularly high tourism concentration, it must nevertheless be stated that universal and reliable indicators (e.g. in terms of quantitative maximum) for the presence or absence of overtourism do not exist. Even though the media landscape repeatedly takes up common European examples, one of the aims of this study is to portray the overtourism discussion on a fundamental level and to trace its development process. Against this background, the research was carried out systematically and contained 11 conversations with destination managers from rural destinations. Hence, the selection of the interview partners was based on the number of overnight stays in NUTS-2 regions within the European Union, which is in accordance with other studies focusing on the issue within Europe (Peeters et al., 2018. In order to compare this rural perspective with an urban one, eight interviews with destination managers from various cities were conducted; the selection of relevant cities was based on the total number of visitors in Europe’s most visited cities in 2015. This ranking is confirmed by recent lists published subsequent to the survey (Euromonitor International, 2018). In addition, a few destinations were taken into account of which the authors are aware of strong dynamics of tourism growth and thus were considered as valuable contributors to the study. In terms of willingness to participate, not all systematically requested destinations wanted to contribute to the research, which explains that some high-ranked destinations have not been interviewed. Generally speaking, more convincing had to be done at the urban level than in rural destinations.

In addition to a destination-specific assessment of the relationship between guest and host, the interview guideline itself also addressed the role of guests and their behavior. Furthermore, the perception of tourism development in general and particularly within the interviewee’s destination
was discussed. Subsequently, the interview guideline contained questions about both solution- and future-oriented strategies, as well as concrete measures in order to actively face overtourism. Hereby, it is important to emphasize that conscious efforts were made not to use the term “Overtourism” during the conversation, in order to avoid a negative attitude toward the topic in general. As far as the interviewees did not explicitly mention the term, “Overtourism” itself was only specifically addressed at the end of the interview by means of a concluding question on associations of the term.

The open character of the interviews mentioned above can be explained by the conduction of the study according to the principles of the GABEK®-method (German abbreviation for “Ganzheitliche Bewältigung von Komplexität”: holistic coping of complexity): within this method, normal-language verbal data can be transferred and visualized in the form of complex linguistic networks (Zelger and Lösch, 2012). In this field, GABEK® can also be used for the modelling of cooperative relationships in the context of regional and destination development, based on joint solution approaches (Pechlaner et al., 2019; Pechlaner and Volgger, 2012). By using the accompanying WinRelan® software and based on a lexical coding, connections can be identified in the sum of all interview statements. In this process, the interviews can be reduced in their complexity (Zelger and Lösch, 2012), and semantic interrelations can be shown in the form of network graphs. In the course of the study’s evaluation, 1,391 keywords have been coded, with the three most frequent ones being tourism (132 mentions), locals (127 mentions) and guests (125 mentions), highlighting the central thematic framework of the study. After coding the single keywords, 76,760 connections between the keywords could be determined. In this process, the thickness of the lines between the single keywords illustrates the frequency of the connection between the respective contextual denominations. Subsequently and based on an in-depth knowledge of the conducted interviews, a thematic clustering can be added in form of indicated circles around thematically related keywords. Figure 4 highlights the central steps within the work process according to GABEK® via the use of the WinRelan® software.
4. Findings

The results of the interview series are presented in this section. An important aspect for the understanding of the discussion about overtourism is the interaction between the tourism organization and the local population on the one hand, and the ideas and expectations of guests on the other hand (Figure 5). Due to both a high relevance in discussion and a dynamism in development, special attention is paid to urban destinations in the study, which is why an in-depth analysis of central interview statements is given space here (Figure 6). In the course of the formulation of challenges and perspectives by the interview partners, possible strategies and concrete measures are presented (Figures 7 and 8). In this field of tension, the DMO plays a decisive role, which will also be examined more closely (Figure 9).

The definition of the attractiveness of a tourist offer is the result of a multilateral negotiation process between the supply and the demand side. Neither side speaks with a single voice when it comes to overtourism. On the supply side, a certain level of acceptance is required among the local population, which does not benefit directly from tourism in an economic way and which is...
positively associated with the tourism attitude. The tolerance threshold also depends on the role tourism plays in the economic sector of a region. These considerations show a cross-link to the concept of Tourist Area Life Cycle. The following statements of various interviewees, which are handled anonymous here, even though the destinations were named before, illustrate that by way of example:

I think the majority of the population is still positively disposed towards tourism, because, as mentioned at the beginning, it simply brings a very large part of the population their wages and bread.
I also believe that the integration of the population is important in the discussion about tourism: How can I deal with tourists, what can evolve positively for me?

For many respondents, the political framework is an important orientation. To understand the economic growth of tourism not only as an opportunity but also as a challenge requires courage and the support of political actors. These set the pace for the regulatory framework and can...
promote projects that provide alternatives to purely quantitative growth. However, the DMO has the main responsibility in defining the right projects being pursued. It is both an advocate and a quality manager of the regional tourism industry. It must initiate promising strategies in the fields of authenticity, quality or strict limitation and contribute to their consistent pursuit.

The fact that courageous decisions have to be made here becomes clear in view of the changes on the demand side: the guests are looking for more authentic experiences and have certain expectations of their journey, which they want to be met in the end. For destinations, this means to provide the guest the most authentic experience possible, and thus to avoid a certain standardization, which can be achieved by focusing on the development of high-quality and location-specific offers. Next to this, a certain welcome culture is a fundamental criterion for success and can only be achieved if residents regard tourism positively. If there are shortcomings, corrective measures must be taken. The guest also bears responsibility for his acceptance in the destination on account of his behavior during his stay. This is why learning is required on both sides.

The need for action is first and foremost seen in urban destinations: a spatial concentration of tourism (e.g. in the form of cruise tourism) and also the issue of seasonality are seen as a particularly vivid problems, which serve as prime examples in this study, as well as in many other considerations of overtourism. It is accompanied by a mass concentration, which represents a burden for the population and therefore visualizes limits of carrying capacity in the destination. There has been an undesirable development in recent years:

In the beginning, this was a very important and popular segment, they tried very hard to attract more cruise ships because, let me say roughly ten years ago, it was also a very wealthy tourist class that undertook cruises. [...] It’s a completely different clientele now, which almost exclusively spends the budget for the trip itself and no longer in the destinations.

In addition to an increase in waste caused by tourism, the traffic problem is seen as a particularly critical disturbance factor that is directly and constantly perceived by the local population. Solutions are inevitable, especially here, if the acceptance of tourism is to be promoted. The overcrowding associated with overtourism has both temporal and spatial dimensions: the classic tourist traveling during the weekend to hotspots within a city or visiting the historical center is often viewed critically:

So you can try very hard to have those tourists being spread wider in the city, but the popular places will always be crowded.

These areas are deliberately avoided by the local population and the protest against tourism emerging in many places is ignited by them. Tourist offers outside the center and in the rural area are seen as meaningful alternatives, which, however, have to be brought in connection to the city’s offers. Talking about rural destinations, the overtourism discussion can be seen at an early and fundamental stage. However, a serious debate can be stated according to the interview material, since rural destinations consider this topic as a strategic core issue for future-oriented destination development.

When the destination managers were asked about possible strategies concerning the challenges in a guest-host relationship and especially in the context of city destinations, different fields of action were summarized. A central and common point is a clever communication and marketing strategy, both toward guests and locals. This should be oriented less to unconditional growth than to its appropriate distribution.

Target-oriented strategies in this context are the promotion of the low season or the highlighting of places outside the center, as well as the attraction of new target groups, who could use the tourist offer in another way. These strategies are by no means trivial. In order to actually achieve a substantial change in marketing, authentic and interesting stories and the cooperation of broad stakeholder groups in tourism are needed, as the following quotation underlines:

The challenge is that tourism continues to grow and that the resources, i.e. the area of a city, are limited in comparison to rural areas. We have to consider early on how we can arrange this growth in a way that is compatible with the different user groups of a city, i.e. residents and guests alike, so that we can maintain acceptance for tourism in the city and also preserve and improve the experience of the guests on site.
In addition to these rather soft and indirectly regulating factors, hard control instruments, such as price changes, a better distribution of guests through an appropriate range of infrastructure or consistent visitor guidance, were also mentioned.

The basis for such a change in marketing or in visitor guidance measures is the formulation of higher-level goals for sustainable tourism development, which are, for example, laid down in a general plan. In order to understand tourism growth as a challenge and to point out alternatives for sustainable tourism, the interviewees mentioned the leadership of individual actors, in addition to politics, as an essential factor for the formulation of strategies.

Figure 8 presents concrete measures resulting from the formulated strategies, which can be summarized as follows: the creation of awareness in different levels is summarized in the field of a societal understanding of tourism. In professional and academic circles, addressing these challenges (e.g. at conferences) is a necessary measure. In addition, the consistent sensitization of the locals about the relevance and of the tourists about the appropriate behavior is of high importance. A more direct measure is the above-mentioned spatial and seasonal distribution of guests and the promotion of tourist offers outside the center. However, tasks that do not have any immediately visible effects must not be underestimated:

So, what we have set ourselves as a task, is to ensure better distribution throughout the year. We focus new initiatives that emerge in these times.

It was also frequently mentioned that measures should, wherever possible, avoid direct restrictions and cutbacks in supply and instead promote the acceptance of tourism by the locals. Conversely, measures to concretely limit the supply were only mentioned very hesitantly. Instead, it was pointed out that, in order to take concrete and, for some participants, painful measures, monitoring is first necessary in order to understand the actual problem, and to be able to formulate measures, more precisely:

Fortunately, however, we now have the opportunity to see from other cities what works there and what doesn’t, and we can get involved at an early stage in the planning of measures or in monitoring the sensitisation of the population.

Such an analysis could be substantially supported by the use of I&C-technologies and smart data, such as the creation of motion profiles or tracking tools.

Even though destination managers do not always formulate immediate needs for action in their own destination, they recognize the central role of the DMO in overcoming the challenge of overtourism:

We are in the process of introducing measures […], and we have a new destination management department to deal with these issues more effectively. How can we ensure the quality of the product, be it the experience of the guest on site, the quality of the service providers, i.e. with training courses, or even the topic of distribution?

From the interview statements, specific competencies mentioned repeatedly can be derived, which go beyond the general task portfolio and which in their entirety can provide an idea of an exemplary approach to this topic. As Figure 9 shows, a DMO simultaneously assumes several roles in this process. On the one hand, it is a contact point for perceived and expressed challenges in connection with overtourism, and on the other hand, it provides a broad range of support for the tourism enterprises. It is called upon to take on a leading role in the development of concepts. At the same time, the DMO has to successfully shape a process of change with regard to its self-understanding. Hereby, the DMO is seen more and more as a classical marketing and management organization and increasingly as the designer of a target-oriented communication process. In the entire debate, it is at the same time an authority in the formulation of sustainable tourism development and an advocate of the tourism industry. This can turn out to be a balancing act, as different expectations, such as economic success and social requirements, have to be fulfilled at the same time.

The instruments over which the DMO wishes to exert influence are mainly in the area of persuasion, for example by highlighting good examples. Hard restrictions, on the other hand, are viewed critically:

For me it would be the last resort to make any entry restrictions at the city border that define which tourist or business traveller is allowed to enter and which is not.
The results show that in times of overtourism, hard and soft criteria are discussed. However, destination managers see soft criteria as possibilities for solutions rather than hard ones. In this field, DMOs have to define strategies within the destination’s specific setting in order to derive clear measures that can contribute to future-oriented destination development.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this research was to figure out how the overtourism discussion is currently perceived on the destination level, which needs for action should be formulated and, subsequently, which competencies should be developed. Talking about the perception of overtourism on a destination level, several attitudes become clear. On a level of responsibility, destination managers in rural destinations push the issue far away and tend to see challenges in the field of overtourism mainly in cities. On the contrary, urban destination managers see the problem above all not in their own, but rather in other cities, which are mentioned in the media. In some well-known cases, first measures like entry restrictions and additional market regulation (e.g. taxation, fees and dynamic pricing) already exist. Thus, they do not see a need for acting within their own sphere of responsibility. On the level of action, it becomes clear that first measures take place. However, especially in cities where overtourism is attested, a rethinking has begun in recent months and the discussion is regarded less as taboo and rather as a topic affecting the tourism industry as a whole.

Current developments show that successful tourism development can no longer focus exclusively on numerical growth. Rather, KPI’s and future success must be defined in a different way. Here it is important to identify alternatives and to communicate their linkages to the classic tourism stakeholders, especially toward individual, value-added-oriented companies. With regard to the DMO, this development underlines that organizations can no longer limit themselves exclusively to the marketing function, but rather require a holistic management as well as an intensive support of an interdisciplinary stakeholder dialog. The DMO’s task is to assume leadership for a joint destination development. Within this framework, there are cross-links to the topics and responsible actors for regional and location development, as well as cross-links to the individual companies, also beyond the mere field of tourism. In addition to these stakeholders, local inhabitants have to be taken into consideration particularly, when it comes to tourism-related housing development and gentrification processes.

In general, it can be stated that the current discussion is very much in the realm of perceptions and subjective images. This is reflected in an inadequate definition of generally applicable indicators. Additional information is needed to derive concrete, target-oriented measures within the destination. In this way, a solution can lie in a stronger focus on data-supported decisions and actions. In the sense of a “smart” destination development, responsible actors can increasingly fall back on the potentials in the field of I&c-technologies in order to improve efficiency, sustainability and quality of experience (Gretzel et al., 2015). For example, a real-time based, data-supported distribution of visitors on a spatial level can enable a distribution to different attraction points at different day times, in order to avoid a strong concentration of visitor numbers in a specific area (e.g. through flexible pricing).

Especially against this background, it is worth taking a closer look at previous discussions and research on “too much” tourism. The discussion about carrying capacity had several ups and downs in the past. Due to the continuous growth of tourism on a global level, no fundamental reactions have taken place so far. This makes it clear that overtourism, which is also charged with media interest, must be viewed with some skepticism regarding its scientific and practice-oriented half-life. Nevertheless, it can be observed that many destinations have reached a phase of their life cycle through constant development, in which they have to deal intensively with the question of their future development. This makes it clear that overtourism is more than just a popular “buzzword.”

As it has been shown on several occasions, the DMO does not lose importance in the context of current developments, but it needs to transform its core tasks: competence building and development is a central aspect. Pioneer destinations must recognize both existing and upcoming challenges early on, actively manage them and set an example for other destinations. In addition to suitable structures and resources, the willingness for targeted changes is also required on this path.
Above all, this requires the political will and perseverance of all involved stakeholders to abandon traditional structures and to define new KPIs that are effective in the long run.

Future research may focus on the extent to which guests are willing to subordinate their travel experiences to Big Data algorithms and whether counter-trends can be expected in the future. From a critical perspective, it should be noted that situation-related, coincidental surprises can fall by the wayside due to so-called “over-management” (Siu and Huang, 2015, p. 302). Such unexpected occurrences, however, are yet one reason for traveling. In the context of these developments, the question arises concerning where the limits in the management of (Over-) tourism lie and whether the traveler wants to and will play this game at all. All in all, it can be said that the discussion about overtourism is characterized by a high degree of dynamism, where results and interpretations can change in short time intervals. This also affects the learning destination manager in a special way. It can be assumed that promising approaches will be adopted by other destinations. Further research can thus assist in an even more concrete formulation of measures and indicators and their specific transfer to other context conditions. Since this paper investigates overtourism from a DMO’s point of view, future research could also highlight the topic from the perspective of tourism-related stakeholders who are supposed to benefit and partly depend from a high tourism volume in economic terms, like for example shopkeepers, tour-operators, real estate or gastronomy.

The study has shown that overtourism is to be understood as a larger component within the transformative development of tourism. In addition to the DMO and the local population, tourists themselves are also called upon to play an active role in shaping this change. New methods that can also be derived from the existing carrying capacity fieldwork have to emerge.

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The Phygital experience in the smart tourism destination

Francisco Javier Ballina, Luis Valdes and Eduardo Del Valle

Abstract

Purpose – Information communication technologies (ICTs) of destination are not a mere mechanism of technical interaction; they are, above all, new mixed realities that integrate physical and digital resources. Using the utility of technology indicator, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate a new experiential model.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey of 377 tourists that stayed at hotels was conducted. It dealt with three different issues: the value of digital technologies when creating experiences, the different appeal of the digital device applications, and the measurement of the level of satisfaction with the destination, stay and expenditure.

Findings – ICTs are the main tool for building the value of the tourist experience and technological utilities increase the competitiveness of the destination. Furthermore, two types of ICT utility were identified: individual and social experience.

Research limitations/implications – These include the problems of a sampling procedure, operating with a database of tourists’ opinions, and also the specificities of each destination in particular.

Practical implications – Smart tourism destination should be considered a part of the tourist service. They are not merely information feedback but facilitate the generation of experiences built on the new digital realities.

Social implications – The Phygital phenomenon represents a radical change in the personal and social behaviour of tourists, incorporating technological matters as a direct component in their decisions and actions.

Originality/value – Phygital experience is a radical change for co-creation in tourism. Tourists are not demanding improvements but rather a new experiential model.

Keywords Co-creation, Mobile technologies, Smart tourism destination, Phygital concept

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of digital transformation is reaching all sectors (Omarini, 2018) and can be broken down into six essential characteristics: hyper-connectivity, unlimited power of everything virtual, artificial intelligence, storage in the cloud, proliferation of digital sensors and the development of cybersecurity (Stone et al., 2017).

The combination of information communication technologies (ICTs) linked to such characteristics implies a perfect integration between the mobility of digital terminals (smartphones) and the ubiquity of the internet itself. The term mobiquity (coined by Antonczak and Papetti, 2017a, b) generates a new mixed reality, like a virtual continuum which allows the user to achieve a total immersion using several of the senses (Nofal et al., 2017). These same authors establish three very useful levels of mixed reality: augmented reality (level 1) that requires some types of interaction so that digital acts with physical; integrated reality (level 2) that includes new non-visual sensations of reality; and acted reality (level 3) that implies the immersion of the individual in a new type of reality.

Hence, the tourist experience is undergoing a great transformation, as a consequence of the implementation of technology, and not only as a tool of improvement, such as technology-enhanced tourism experiences (Neuhofer et al., 2015), but also as a transformation
factor that leads to a new type of tourist experience (Neuhofer et al., 2013), manifested as a virtual immersion (Guttentag, 2019).

ICTs are also modifying the ways in which tourist destinations are managed. The appearance of the concept of the smart city originated, immediately, the development of smart tourism (ST) (Zhu et al., 2014), and in turn smart tourism destination (STDes) (Lamsfus et al., 2015; Del Chiappa and Baggio, 2015; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013).

Under different approaches (European, North American and Chinese), the concept of ST is being considered as the most important challenge for the tourism industry. ST is defined as a technological platform which integrates tourist resources and information technologies (artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and cloud) to offer the tourist explicit information and efficient services through mobile terminals (Zhu et al., 2014).

ST has a clear final goal in the satisfaction of the requirements of tourists, in terms of convenience, response time and improvement of their decisions. Therefore, there seems to be an evident point of contact between ST and the production of new digital tourist experiences.

This paper aims precisely to study the gap which is produced between the paradigm of the STDes and the new Phygital tourist experiences. To that end, a presentation is first made of the state of the question of the new Phygital concept and of advances in the study of smart tourist destinations. Later, the hypotheses and the empirical methodology are given, in terms of the value of the technological component of the experience. Finally, the results and the most relevant conclusions of the work are presented.

2. Literature review

The smart concept is being widely used in tourism (Gretzel et al., 2015a). However, its theoretical foundations are not yet clear. In the literal sense, the term ST may be similar to intelligence, although the greatest difference resides in the anticipation of the needs of the tourists, by means of information (Li et al., 2017). According to Gretzel et al. (2015a), ST includes three principles: smart information, smart exchange and smart processing, which are developed under two related premises: technological omnipresence (wireless) and the generation of individual experiences in situ (Höjer and Wangel, 2015).

ST implies three main components (Gretzel et al., 2015a), all of them linked to ICTs (Sigala and Chalkati, 2014). The first is the smart destination, the key aspect being the integration of ICTs in the tourist infrastructure (the classical approach of Asian academic literature). In fact, most researchers define the smart destination placing the primary emphasis on ICTs (Boes et al., 2015; Lamsfus et al., 2015; López de Avila, 2015; Xiang et al., 2015). It is based on optimisation through the connection between information technology of high quality and physical infrastructure by means of sensors, intelligent devices and Big Data employed within a determined geographical space (Gretzel et al., 2015b; Koo et al., 2016; Werther et al., 2015).

The second component is the smart business (Gretzel et al., 2015a), understood as the generation of interactive platforms between private and public tourism stakeholders by means of which dialogue is produced, personalisation is encouraged and more significant experiences can be created (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Several authors emphasise the high value of the interaction and synergies of the stakeholders (Buhalis and Jun, 2011; Koo et al., 2016).

The third component is the social change caused by the convergence between ICTs and the tourist experience (Hunter et al., 2015). ICTs produce changes in the models of behaviour of the tourist (Li et al., 2017), given that ST will allow the anticipation of their needs and enrichment of their experiences (Gretzel et al., 2015b).

ICTs have generated new opportunities to create tourist experiences (Buonincontri and Micera, 2016), especially through their potential for personalisation (Gretzel, 2011; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2013). The tourist experience improves through personalisation, knowledge of the context and monitorisation in real time (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013; Gretzel et al., 2015b).
ICTs are fundamental for STDes in as much as they exert a great influence on the co-creation of tourist experiences (Zhu et al., 2014), allowing the destinations to substantially improve their effectiveness and competitiveness (Zhang and Liu, 2012; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2013). Co-creation depends directly on interaction (Buonincontri and Micera, 2016), and this depends on the dynamism of the information (Rahman et al., 2016).

Gretzel et al. (2015a) proposed the concept of an ST ecosystem, a system which creates, administers and delivers intelligent experiences to the tourists; a similar concept to that of the smart information system of Wang et al. (2016).

More recently, Liburd et al. (2017) developed the term co-design, which refers to what produces interactions in the STDes, and how and among whom they are produced. For these authors, co-design is prior to co-creation, the latter of interest when contact is made between the tourist and agents, whereas the former represents the mentality of collaboration in the whole tourist process.

ICTs have gone from being a mediator of experiences to comprising their core, with the appearance of the Phygital experience concept, accepted in the 2017 World Marketing Congress of the Academy of Marketing Science (Rossi and Krey, 2018). In fact, the term Phygital appeared in the retail sector in 2014, where it has had a greater conceptual development (Claes et al., 2017; Purcarea, 2018), leading to the so-called MCommerce (Duhan and Singh, 2019). The first applications occurred in the fashion industry (Armstrong and Rutter, 2017), followed by the banking sector (Acquaro, 2017). Likewise, the research carried out into the Phygital concept to date in the tourism sector has been focused on the case of heritage tourism (Antonczak and Papetti, 2017; Errichiello and Marasco, 2017; Corne, 2017; Rahman et al., 2016). The majority of heritage resources represent a vast amount of information that not only becomes more accessible to the general public but, above all, in several formats, also becomes more dynamic and interactive (Nofal et al., 2017).

In contrast to the levels of assisted technology and technology enhancement, where ICTs play a support role, at the Phygital level, co-creation and ICTs combine strongly to form an integral, immersive and penetrating experience (Antonczak and Papetti, 2017; Neuhofer et al., 2013) (see Figure 1).

The term Phygital describes the symbiosis of physical space and virtual space. The perception of touristic space as well as the interaction with it has been altered by Phygital appearances and appearances...
changing travel behaviour (Neuburger et al., 2018): “The Phygital experience consists in hybridising the physical and the digital components at the same time and in the same place” (Belghiti et al., 2017, p. 61).

The Phygital concept implies the automatic activation of ICTs when contact is produced between the devices of the tourist and the multiple sensors of the STDes network (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013; Buonincontri and Micera, 2016). The sensors are the central equipment for generating the Phygital experience (Nofal et al., 2017) by means of the synchronisation of physical and digital. In that respect, Neuhofer et al. (2015) highlighted the following technologies: IoT, RFID tags, QE codes and NFC tags. Many other authors such as Neuburger et al. (2018) emphasise the role of virtual reality (Cranmer et al., 2018) and augmented reality (Jung and Tom Dieck, 2017) as they increase the mixture of perception of real and virtual. The next generation of Phygital ICTs is already close (Errichiello and Marasco, 2017): recommendation systems, contextual knowledge systems, autonomous search agents, data mining in the web and environmental intelligence.

The ubiquitous digital technologies (IoT, open data, cloud computing, geo-positioning systems, artificial intelligence, self-learning machines or cognitive computing) form “a hyperconnected” skin on the body of tourists (Rabari and Storper, 2015). This facilitates the creation of their own tourist experiences (Gretzel et al., 2016). Thus, STDes and the Phygital concept are related, converging technology with the tourist experience, in real time and in a totally customised way (Li et al., 2017).

In line with the newness of the Phygital concept, there is a lack of research into the fusion of technologies in the tourist experiences (Neuhofer et al., 2015). In fact, most of the works study the impact of only some form of technology, when the reality is that ICTs operate as a network of synergies (Buhalis and Jun, 2011). Furthermore, not only is it necessary to study the role of ICTs, but also that of the people as those who demand the Phygital experiences (Liburd et al., 2017). The logic of the service must dominate the concept and development of STDes (Wang et al., 2016), so that the exchange of services, coordinated and superimposed on the STDes network, produces the co-creation of the value of the tourists. However, there is hardly anything in the literature on the gap between the STDes approach and the Phygital co-creation (Buonincontri and Micera, 2016).

3. Objectives and hypotheses

The new paradigm of the STDes places strong emphasis on the active perspective of tourists (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013). That is to say, the intelligent taking of decisions must produce the best experiences for the tourists (Boes et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016).

The reality of the success of ICTs for STDes will depend on the perception of tourists on the level of coherence between their expectations, attitudes and behaviour (Buonincontri and Micera, 2016; Martini et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016).

Moreover, it is evident that the Phygital tourist experience is characterised by an intense use and exchange of information with the mobile technological devices of tourists (Gretzel et al., 2015b; Neuhofer et al., 2013). Thus, the study of the interrelations of tourists with these technologies must constitute a fundamental principle for understanding the STDes. This is an aspect that is lacking in evidence, beyond a mere almost axiomatic assumption.

Most of the works on tourists and their use of ICTs have focused on the segmentation of markets. Blanco (2015) and TripBarometer (2016) proposes applying the use of the internet in mobile telephones as a key variable for segmentation, especially in relation to the different phases of the process of the purchase and trip. The proposal of Redondo (2016) stands out, distinguishing between: tourist 1.0 (Consumer), tourist 2.0 (Prosumer: tourist information producer on social networks) and tourist 3.0 (Adprosumer: active co-creator of experiences), according to the degree of implication of technology during their trip. In relation to this typology, more recently González (2017) established five central characteristics of the tourist 3.0: connected, seeks out/gives recommendations, influential, aware and changeable.
Another line of research, with scarce academic repercussions, refers to the case of the STDes paradigm beyond the big cities. Indeed, perhaps from the evident derivation of the concept of smart destination from the wider concept of smart city, almost all the research has focused on large cities that are tourist destinations (Venice, Salzburg), where the technological capacities and innovations work practically as pioneers. Also, there is an evident lack of literature on medium-sized or smaller cities, which are of high value in terms of tourism.

Accordingly, this work focuses on incorporating new research into the demand on STDes, specifically aiming to verify the existence of technological determining factors of the tourists when developing their experience of (Phygital) co-creation in a destination. The work does not follow a segmentation approach but, on the contrary, follows one of the relations of causality between the tourist, technology and destination. In addition, the city under study is small, scarcely reaching 300,000 inhabitants, and is on the coast, with beaches, which lessens the strong influence of technology when compared to the way of life of a large city.

Graphically, Figure 2 displays and relates the objective of the work with the different hypotheses. Thus, tourists translate their experience into a certain value for the STDes, with the incorporation of co-creation that is determined by the role or utility of the technology for the tourist. In this way, from the valuation of the STDes, different results are produced concerning satisfaction for the tourist and profitability for the destination.

On the other hand, the technological utilities can be of two large types, personal interaction with the destination and social interaction, which have differing importance according to the type of utility sought by the tourist.

The term “experience” implies the concept of value (Yang and Mattila, 2016) as tourists immediately assign different values to their experiences. Similarly, co-creation adds value to the tourist experience (Chatthoth et al., 2016), by incorporating resorting to technology as a factor for improving the experience through the strong interaction of the tourist with the attractions and with the other tourists (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Neuhofer et al., 2013). Therefore:

**H1.** The perception of utility of ICTs for the tourist has a positive effect on the value of the experience in the STDes.

The positive consequences of the valuation of the STDes in the context of the tourism of experiences are represented by the concepts of satisfaction and level of expenditure, which are considered measurable outcomes both for tourists and for the stakeholders of the destination (Grissemann and Stokburger, 2012). A positive effect on both concepts is expected (Howell et al., 2012; Salvado et al., 2011; Shaw et al., 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2011), for which reason:

**H2.** The perception of utility of ICTs by tourists increases the competitiveness of the STDes in terms of greater satisfaction and spending at the destination.

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**Figure 2** Conceptual model

![Conceptual model diagram]
For tourists, digital technologies have become a critical instrument of their trip (Amaro et al., 2016). For that reason, destinations are adding technological utilities to their marketing practices, first in order to attract visitors (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Usakli et al., 2017), and second to increase the satisfaction of tourists with their stay.

Mobile technologies have a significant impact on the attitudes of the consumers and their purchase intentions (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015), which directly affect the destinations (Liu et al., 2014; Cheung et al., 2009). That said, one must distinguish between the technologies that influence, on the one hand, the planning of the trip from those that influence the decisions for the contracting of services in the destination (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). Therefore:

H3. The value of the perceived utility of ICTs by tourists is the sum of the value of personal use plus the value of social use.

But, as there are different developed technological utilities, set in operation by the destinations (Almeida and Moreno, 2017; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Sotiriadis, 2017), it is possible to propose that:

H3a. The diverse cases of ICTs provide different value in terms of utility for tourists, whether they are personal or social in the STDes.

4. Methodology and results

The information used in this work corresponds to the data facilitated by means of a personal survey answered by tourists, exclusively holidaymakers, in the city of Gijón[1], according to the technical characteristics indicated in Table I.

The selected database has operated with three large groups of variables: first, those which correspond to the role of technology in general on the behaviour of the tourist; second, the technological utilities proposed at the destination; and, finally, variables representative of their effects on the average stay and satisfaction. The variables and the scales of measurement used are indicated in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I: Profile of respondent sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population and unit of the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of the work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Data collection method              | Personal survey carried out in the urban hotel establishments (between 2 and 4 stars)
| Sampling procedure                  | By quotas, according to the number of rooms in each hotel. |
| Number of surveys                   | 377 valid                                          |
| Conditions of the sample            | $\alpha = 0.05$; $\beta = 0.5$                     |
| Sampling error                      | $\varepsilon = \pm 0.05$                           |
| Characteristics of the sample       |                                                     |
| Gender                              | 49.9% men; 50.1% women                             |
| Age                                 | Minimum = 18; maximum = 82; mean = 43.8; median = 42 |
| Educational level                   | University = 44.4%; advanced vocational training = 27.9%; bachelor’s = 13.8%; others = 13.9%. |
| Nationality                         | Spaniards = 86.2%; foreigners = 13.8%             |
| Area of origin of the              | Madrid; Region of Castile; Galicia; Andalusia; Basque Country. |
| Spaniards                           |                                                     |
| Country of origin of              | Latin America; the UK; France; Portugal; Germany. |
| foreigners                          |                                                     |
| Travelling as                       | Couple = 44.6%; family = 24.3%; friends = 14%; alone = 11.5%; organised group = 5.6% |
| Note:                               | *There are no five-star hotels in the city*        |
The measurement scales of the variables have been based on different works in the literature: the Likert scale of the TTCi variables in the works of Ivars et al. (2016, 2017), and the scales of the technological utilities variables in the works of Buhalis and Amaranggana (2013), Gretzel et al. (2015b) and Zhang et al. (2015). Finally, the metric scales of the Ri variables in the works of Tarí et al. (2010) have been used. Furthermore, reliability analyses have been carried out for both of the large blocks of variables, representative of ICTs, with IBM SPPS v.20. The objective of testing the validity of the variables and the correct operation of their scales has been vouched for by the results of Cronbach’s α, with values superior to 0.7 and with strong significance in the ANOVA and Hotelling t-tests (see Table III).

First, the valuation of a smart tourist destination has been calculated, according to the direct answers of the tourists interviewed. As can be appreciated in Figure 3, practically two-thirds of the tourists give the maximum valuation, in points, to the STDes, with an average of 4.41 (for a significative α).

To constitute the variable “utility technology” (H1), and estimate its value by the tourists, a factorial analysis of correspondences (FAC) has been carried out with the scores granted to the technology questions in general. Prior to the presentation of the results, it is necessary to

---

**Table II** Scale items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour of the tourist</td>
<td>TTC1 = what I see on social networks influences my opinion of a tourist destination</td>
<td>Likert (1–5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC2 = technologies help me have a more satisfactory experience as a tourist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC3 = technologies are a fundamental part of my trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC4 = technologies are a useful tool on my trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC5 = it worries me that a company can register and save my activity in my tourist destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC6 = I would let the tourist companies obtain my personal details through the internet in return for offers, discounts or personalised services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC7 = I value positively that my destination tries to innovate and use technologies to improve my experience as a tourist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC8 = I trust other tourists’ opinions on websites such as TripAdvisor or Booking.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTC9 = this destination is innovative, it always proposes new experiences for the tourist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological utilities</td>
<td>TU1 = touchscreens in the tourist offices or on the streets of the destination</td>
<td>Nominal (yes or no) and posterior Likert (1–5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU2 = official accounts of the destination on social networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU3 = official web of the destination in various languages, with videos, photos, possibility of booking activities, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU4 = online assistance of the tourist office (telephone, chat, Skype)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU5 = QR codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU6 = free public Wi-Fi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU7 = free Wi-Fi in the companies at the destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU8 = official apps of the destination for smartphone or tablet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU9 = audio guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU10 = video guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU11 = online booking on the webpage of the destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU12 = payment via mobile phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TU13 = multiuse tourist card (transport, museums)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>R1 = number of nights of stay</td>
<td>Metric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2 = degree of satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Table III** Reliability analyses of the original variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Block 1: technology and tourism</th>
<th>Block 2: technological utilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s α</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Cronbach’s α</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA (sig.)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling t-test (sig.)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
emphasise an interesting finding: the questions relative to data privacy (TTC5 and TTC6), and of their use by the tourist suppliers, do not surpass the minimum communalities to carry out an FAC, and so they have been eliminated, to be analysed later.

As can be observed in the set of results shown in Table IV, the FAC is valid, both from the measurement of the reliability of the scale (with Cronbach’s α superior to 0.7), and from the validity tests (either Bartlett’s test, significative or the KMO measure, above 0.7).

Table IV  Factorial analysis of the correspondences of the technological items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability statistics</th>
<th>No. of elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s α</td>
<td>0.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMO and Bartlett test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiser–Meyer–Okin measure of sampling adequacy</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s sphericity test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. χ²</td>
<td>2,091.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I see on social networks influences my opinion of a tourist destination</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies help me have a more satisfactory experience as a tourist</td>
<td>0.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies are a fundamental part of my trips</td>
<td>0.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies are a useful tool on my trips</td>
<td>0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust other tourists’ opinions on websites such as TripAdvisor or Booking.com</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>% accumulated</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>% accumulated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.784</td>
<td>55.690</td>
<td>55.690</td>
<td>2.527</td>
<td>50.545</td>
<td>50.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.542</td>
<td>30.846</td>
<td>86.535</td>
<td>1.800</td>
<td>35.991</td>
<td>86.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>9.009</td>
<td>95.544</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>4.024</td>
<td>99.568</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>100.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technologies help me have a more satisfactory experience as a tourist</td>
<td>0.963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies are a fundamental part of my trips</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies are a useful tool on my trips</td>
<td>0.803</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust other tourists’ opinions on websites such as TripAdvisor or Booking.com</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I see on social networks influences my opinion of a tourist destination</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two main components are generated, which between them accumulate 85 per cent of the variance, and they distinguish between the technological items, in the C1 component, and the items of opinion technologies, in the C2 component. In both cases, they have elevated weights of the initial variables. The values of both components have been kept as artificial variables for the formation of the value of the technology for the tourist.

In accordance with the above, items concerning confidential data have been handled according to the values given by the tourists. Thus, a new variable has been generated, called "release of information", calculated for each tourist, as the difference between their concern about their personal data and its possible release in exchange for certain tourist advantages. As the statistics of Table V reflect, the mean value has a negative sense, although its $-\alpha$ is slightly over 0.05. This leads to the assumption that the tourists are prepared to release their data concerning their behaviour providing that the service suppliers compensate them in a way that interests them.

With the two components (C1, C2) plus the new variable (A1), derivatives of the items on technology, the valuation of the “utility of the technology” has been calculated for each tourist:

\[
TU = (C1 + C2 + A1)
\]

\[
= \frac{0.963TTC2 + 0.959TTC3 + 0.803TTC4 + 0.948TTC8 + 0.929TTC1}{3} + \frac{0.948TTC8 + 0.929TTC1}{2} + (TTC5 - TTC6).
\]

The descriptive statistics of such a result are indicated in Table VI. There is a positive mean of 0.12 points, with $\alpha$ slightly superior to the recommended 0.05.

The relation between the interest variable, the value of the STDes and the utility of the technology has been studied by means of a linear regression which can determine the existence of a hypothetical dependency. As reflected by the different statistical results contained in Table VII, the regression analysis is correct: the values of $R^2$ and of adjusted $R^2$ are found to be between 0.44 and the recommended 0.89, the variance of the residuals is far from the variance of the variable, and the significance of the model is 0.00 for the independent variable.

The standardised coefficient $\beta$ has a positive value of 0.211, which indicates that there is a relation of positive dependency of the variable Value of the STDes, in such a way that 21 per cent of each unit of value is produced by the perceived utility of the technology by the tourists.

On the other hand, when considering the contribution of the types of technological applications that the destinations offer to the utility of the technology, generated in the model, a simple discriminant analysis (SDA) has been created to determine which are the technological applications most valued by tourists using technologies.

Table VIII shows the main statistical results of the SDA, determining the existence of seven clearly explanatory technological applications, specifically: touchscreens, online assistance of the tourism office, free company Wi-Fi and public Wi-Fi, apps, audio guides, video guides and payment via mobile phone.

The statistical contrasts of the analysis grant it a certain robustness in the value of the canonical correlation, value of Wilks’ $\lambda$ and significance $\alpha$ of the $\chi^2$-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table V</th>
<th>Artificial variable “release of information” of the tourist (A1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 = data concern minus compensation for data</td>
<td>−0.3878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table VI</th>
<th>Utility value of the technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net value importance tech</td>
<td>−1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Discussion and conclusions

The previous statistical results seem to indicate the acceptance of the four hypotheses posed. A greater perception of utility of ICTs for the tourist favours an increase in the value of the experience ($\beta = 0.211$). This is consistent with the work of Luna (2016) on the influence of congruence in the experiences, as well as with the different works of Neuhofer et al. (2013, 2015), Zhu et al. (2014) and Gretzel et al. (2015b) which study the interrelation between technology and tourist co-creation.

**Table VII** Linear regression value of the STDes with regard to the utility of the technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>SE of the estimation</th>
<th>Change in $R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of squares</td>
<td>gl</td>
<td>Root mean square</td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>14.427</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.427</td>
<td>20.533</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>308.462</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>322.889</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autovalue</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>% accumulated</th>
<th>Canonical correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function 1</td>
<td>2.176</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks' $\lambda$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>gl</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function test 1</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>453.035</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table VIII** SDA statistics of the technological applications of the destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statistical</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. VALUE Video guides</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. VALUE Touchscreens in the tourist offices or on the streets of the destination</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. VALUE Free Wi-Fi in companies at the destination</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. VALUE Online assistance of the tourist office (by telephone, chat, Skype, etc.)</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. VALUE Payment via mobile phone</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. VALUE Audio guides</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. VALUE Free public Wi-Fi</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. VALUE Official apps of the destination for smartphone or tablet</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>% accumulated</th>
<th>Canonical correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function 1</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Likewise, the greater perception of utility of ICTs leads to an increase in the satisfaction of the tourist with the destination and their economic expenditure ($\beta = 0.51$ and 0.06, respectively). In this sense, the work of Zhang and Liu (2012) and Wang et al. (2016) also found evidence, although not so direct, of the improvement in the effectiveness and competitiveness of the destinations (Figure 4).

The value of technological utilities in tourist co-creation can be broken down into two types: personal and social ($KMO = 0.915$). The work of Matzler et al. (2016) established that the congruence in the tourist experience can be considered in terms of prior to the trip, during the trip and after the trip, with the individual and social aspects taking on a different role. The abundant research on social networks in tourism offers results in accordance with the social utility that ICTs provide for tourists (Amaro et al., 2016).

Finally, the existence of differences has been found in the valuation of the utility of ICTs. Some, the majority, are assumed by the tourists to be essential, whereas others are given a greater added value for the tourist experience ($\lambda = 0.91$). The numerous works on ICTs, from the initial works of Neuhofer et al. (2013) to the most recent of Bec et al. (2019), allow for the consideration of the progressive introduction of the different technological utilities in tourism. The contribution of Nofal et al. (2017), which distinguishes three levels in the types of ICTs, is fundamental in this regard.

Consequently, the implementation of ICTs in tourists’ way of life implies that the development of STDes is carried out in accordance with the service rationale.

When tourists contact a sensor of the STDes, they are demanding that the information flow is useful for their personal experience. The gap that is produced in the physical tourist resource between ICTs and the tourist experience will be critical for the efficiency and competitiveness of the destination.

STDes should not be limited to putting into operation technological utilities based on information and communication but rather they should be principally founded on interaction with tourists, and with a strong experiential content. The concept of mixed reality must be understood to initiate a new phase of development in the STDes.

The Phygital question is fundamental in the case of city tourism. First, this is because its conception of the smart city favours a move towards STDes and, second, because the typologies of city tourism are especially important for their transformation into Phygital experiences. Heritage tourism may be the first to be interested in the Phygital concept, since the value of the tourist experience is greatly expanded (Bec et al., 2019). The cultural tourism of museums, theatres and cinemas; tourism of congresses and exhibitions; tourism of events and, even shopping tourism improve substantially by expanding the wealth of their attractions and tourism experiences using the Phygital perspective. Therefore, the development of STDes and the Phygital experience should be considered as fundamental by technological cities in order to manage their role as tourist destinations.
This paper must be considered as a first work on the role of technology as an end, and not only as a means, of the second generation tourist experience (through technological Co-creation), bearing in mind that, being based on a personal survey, it has some limitations to be taken into consideration. Principally, these are the problems of the sampling procedure, operating with a database of the tourists’ opinions, and also the specificities of each destination in particular. These questions must be confronted in future works by the authors, incorporating more direct sources of information (from the use of apps at the destination) and cloning the methodology to other destinations (initially similar in size).

Be that as it may, the results may be interesting and useful for the administrators of tourist destinations, allowing them to establish the role of ICTs in the smart destination, more as a generator of experiences than as a mere gatherer of Big Data. The specific study of the Phygital experience should be incorporated into tourist research, implying a new line integrated into the study of the STDes.

Research on the Phygital experience has just begun, so we need to progress conceptually and empirically. The arrival of 5G represents a great technological opportunity for the Phygital concept, enabling it to grow very quickly. The lines of research on which we are currently working aim, on the one hand, to differentiate technologies of improvement as opposed to integrating technologies for the tourist experience. We also hope to operate with databases concerning more real behaviour, obtained through some existing STDes sensors.

Note
1. Gijón is a Spanish city located on the shores of the Cantabrian Sea on the coast of the Principality of Asturias. It is the most populated city of the region with 275,000 inhabitants and more than 7,750 hotel beds. It has a marina and several urban beaches.

References


Further reading


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Monaco’s struggle to become a smart destination

Nathalie Fabry and Cyril Blanchet

Abstract

Purpose – Monaco is a simultaneously a destination, a state and a city, which belongs to the long list of places that aims to become smart. The purpose of this paper is to present Monaco’s transformation strategy from October 2017 to May 2019. It will present Monaco’s smart urban ecosystem as a meeting point between the destination and the smart city.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors develop the methodology as an exploratory observation of the state transformations. The methodology relies on an understanding of smart cities policy from an insider perspective, as one of the co-authors participates in the “Matrice Smart-City Monaco” program (Season 1: Tourism), on a media coverage analysis and in a semi-directive interview with a stakeholder of the digital transformation in Monaco.

Findings – The paper empirically and theoretically explores the following three hypotheses: H1 – being a smart city/destination is less a status than a process; H2 – a permeable state city challenges the boundaries between the city and the smart destination; and H3 – the conceptualization of the smart city requires a broader definition of who its engaged stakeholders are.

Research limitations/implications – The case of Monaco helps us to understand the role of tourism in a smart city and to deepen the link between “smart city” and “smart destination” from a theoretical point of view. Monaco offers us the opportunity to reinforce our understanding of the relationship between the smart city and the smart destination.

Originality/value – The study concerns a micro-state that aims to become smart using a top–down strategy. However, for a city to become smart, stakeholders including citizens must be able to support the process.

Keywords Experience, Smart city, Smart destination, Smart tourism, Monaco

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Monaco belongs to the long list of cities that aim to become smart. As Hollands (2008, p. 305) asks, “which city, by definition, does not want to be smart?” The general literature on smart cities is quite abundant but the empirical studies on smart cities is still in its infancy (Anthopoulos et al., 2018; Albino et al., 2015; Caragliu and Del Bo, 2017; Caragliu et al., 2011; Meijer and Bolivar, 2016; Tompsom, 2017; Vanolo, 2014; Zygiaris, 2013). Since the concept’s development in the literature, numerous use cases have sought to create guidelines for smart cities’ development (Giffinger et al., 2007; Lazarciu and Roscia, 2012; Lim et al., 2018). Although far from being idiosyncratic – because all smart cities experiences share some common principles – smart development must recognize the local context, which depends on local resources, ambitions and abilities to integrate stakeholders.

Generally speaking, a smart city refers to a competitive, productive and pleasant place to live (Attour and Rallet, 2014), with a vision driven by information technology (IT) and relying on specific infrastructures that connect personal mobile devices with other technologies (Hashem et al., 2016), such as the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud storage or big data (Liu, L., 2018). More recently, it has been established that the building of a smart city is contingent on three pillars: technology, human resources and governance (Meijer and Bolivar, 2016). This principle serves...
as a means to enhance the global efficiency and quality of life of residents. As Fabry et al. (2018) argue, a smart city is a complex and resilient urban ecosystem that embeds several stakeholders, is driven by IT, innovation and environmental concerns, and benefits from adapted governance.

As a concept in construction, several terms have defined the contribution of technology in a tourism context. For its part, the “smart” concept in tourism is commonly used at two different levels. The first is smart tourism (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2015; Boes et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2016; Li, Hu, Huang and Duan, 2017), working at the broadest level and applying before, during and after the trip. It is often considered as a way to enhance the quality of the touristic experience through IT (Boes et al., 2015, 2016; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014; Gretzel, 2011; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang and Koo, 2015; Gretzel, Werthner, Koo and Lamsfus, 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2012) in order to improve and enrich visitors’ experiences by adapting information and products to their needs (Del Vecchio and Passiante, 2017; Guo et al., 2014; Li, Mostafa and Park, 2017). The second level is the smart destination where smart tourism principles are applied to the governance and strategic management of destinations to create a smart experience for tourists and residents alike (Gretzel, 2018). It generates a new ecosystem, necessitates strong governance (Zeghni and Fabry, 2019) and stimulates the destination management organization’s participation “to act as a coordinator and facilitator of flows and relations” (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019, p. 25). Such cooperation may help the destination to innovate and collect data from various origins, including devices, user-generated content and transactions (Li, Xu, Tang, Wang and Li, 2018). These data enable actors and territories to enrich tourists’ experiences and to create value focused on efficiency and sustainability (Gretzel, 2011; Jiang and Ke, 2018).

This paper will present Monaco’s smart urban ecosystem as a meeting point between the destination (Buhalis, 2000) and the smart city. It will empirically and theoretically explore the following three hypotheses:

H1. Being a smart city/destination is less a status than a process.

H2. A permeable state city challenges the boundaries between the city and the smart destination.

H3. The conceptualization of the smart city requires a broader definition of who its engaged stakeholders are.

In the first part, we will develop our methodology as an exploratory observation of the state transformations. In the second part, we will present the multi-scale place of Monaco seen as a destination, a state and a city, in order to highlight the specificities of the territory. In the third part, we will explain the willingness of the state to become a smart destination and the challenges it has faced in this regard as a consequence of political changes. In the last part, we will discuss how Monaco thus offers us the opportunity to reinforce our understanding of the relationship between the smart city and the smart destination.

Methodology

Our methodology is exploratory through a cross-cases analysis approach (Boes et al., 2015; Xiao and Smith, 2019). Given that the establishment of a “smart Monaco” remains a work in progress and is partially subject to confidentiality, there is a general lack of available and open data. Consequently, we must attain several types of primary data. Accordingly, our methodology is founded on three pillars: a one-year participatory observation of the innovation process of the state of Monaco through the Matrice program; an analysis of media coverage; and a semi-directive interview for exploratory use, to confirm interpretation and vision from the state’s perspective.

Pilar 1: participatory observation

The principality of Monaco is thinking about the city and the state in the twenty-first century and seeks to explore new opportunities stemming from the digital revolution. The principality has launched several innovative projects, including the MonacoTech Incubator to open new business opportunities to support urban development (Blanck et al., 2019), a 5G development covering the entire state and acting as a key driver concerning the digital economy (Li, Xu, and Zhao, 2018), and a smart city project with the aspiration to transform Monaco into an innovative state.
In this context, a partnership between Monaco’s government and the Matrice program developed by Ecole 42 (school 42, www.42.fr) has been launched. It is a free computing school based on peer-to-peer learning, which was created by renowned entrepreneurs in 2013. It develops entrepreneurship programs relying on an innovative and open pedagogy developed by Tiphaine Liu (2018).

The school’s students are required to cooperate with university students and scholars. Together they must answer in an innovative and technology-driven way the following question: How can the experiences of tourists in Monaco be improved? The project titled “Matrice – Smart City Monaco, season 1: Tourism” had the ambition of gathering approximately 30 students from diverse disciplines (business, design, tourism, computing) to think about means of enriching the tourist experience in Monaco. The focus was to use IT as a value creation source for the tourist experience and the state. The duration of the program was ten months and was launched by Monaco’s service in charge of the digital transformation (Matrice, 2017).

The program took place in five stages. Stage 1 allowed students to immerse themselves in Monaco’s tourist ecosystem for 15 days. Each day was punctuated by visits to tourist sites and numerous meetings with the actors of the destination (such as the Minister of State, Oceanographic Museum, MonacoTech, Grimaldi Forum, National Museums, Exotic Garden). Two tools enabled student’s observations to be tracked: the participant author’s notes, and a daily e-mail report centered on four prompts: what I liked, what I liked less, what I learned, what I will apply.

The next three phases (transformation, prototyping or production, action) were punctuated by regular monitoring of the project’s progress with the pedagogical team and the partner. Weekly meetings and workshops were held to “help to build relationships between members to enable the formation of a learning community” (Liu, T., 2018, p. 284). These meetings made it possible to build collective knowledge and allowed us to describe the chronology and progression of the program and to follow the development of the smart city during this period. The transition from one stage to another was consolidated by hackathons to encourage the creative and reflective process, facilitating regular meetings with the professionals involved and the team in charge of the Monaco government program. All of these events could thus validate the directions, verify the interest of the project for the destination and co-establish a satisfactory technical solution.

Pillar 2: confidentiality and media coverage

The students had to sign a confidentiality clause with the principality of Monaco. To deter the misuse of information and avoid revealing confidential information, as insiders we decided to work only with public elements. Fortunately, the event attracted broad media coverage of the partnership and created data (text corpus) linked to institutional communication. In other words, we checked that all observed data would match public data such as speeches, media publications and interviews. Consequently, the present paper is solely based on open information.

Pillar 3: semi-directive interview

This one-year experience saw various changes. First, given that the program was innovation and technology-driven, most of the ideas and concepts that were initially developed by students required adaptation, reorientation or in some cases cancellation. More unexpected was the new political majority that emerged from elections and the related shift in the program’s objectives.

The shift in priorities stimulated a need to deepen comprehension of the new political rules at stake in Monaco. A stakeholder of the program in charge of the digital transformation on behalf of the state was interviewed. We built a semi-directive interview of about 40 questions spread across five sections to put in parallel definitions of territory and destination, smart city and smart destination, smart tourists and smart inhabitants, and institutional communication and touristic communication. The interview aimed to confirm the changes, to understand the stakes and to identify the difficulties of the territory in realizing the dynamics of the smart city. Finally, we ensured that our work in progress was proofread to validate the truthfulness of the information collected and to discuss the paradoxes and perspectives present, thus ensuring a thorough understanding of the subject area (Figure 1).
The role of Monaco

The principality of Monaco is simultaneously a micro-state, a city and a well-known tourist destination. Its international reputation is based on the legacy of the former and late princes, but it needs new foundations to cope with the digital transformations and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century.

Monaco is a micro-state

In 2017, the population of Monaco amounted to 38,300 inhabitants, among whom only one third (9,258) were of Monegasque nationality (IMSEE, 2018). Thus, two thirds of the population today are foreigners, most of whom belong to the wealthiest classes in search of security, tax cuts and an outstanding way of life on the Mediterranean seaboard. Due to economic differentials with France, cross-border commuting is frequent (Decoville et al., 2013). Therefore, Monaco supports 54,303 jobs (mainly in service industries) and French citizens living near the border hold most of the jobs and commute on a daily basis (IMSEE, 2018).

The principality of Monaco is a small country, but its touristic profile is far broader owing to its geographical location, economic specialization and international reputation. Table I identifies the physical and symbolic borders that render it possible to understand the place of Monaco. Each year, more than 9m visitors travel to Monaco for one day or more. As Monaco is a part of the French Riviera, visitors often combine Monaco with other places nearby (Menton, Nice, Antibes, Juan-les-Pins or Vallauris). Consequently, Monaco must insert itself into a broader ecosystem (French Riviera, Côte d’Azur and the Mediterranean Sea) and differentiate itself from other international destinations by choosing specific markets and a new tourism development path (Escudier, 2014).

The royal family as a touristic attractor

Vinyals-Mirabent (2019) stressed that touristic attractors linked to history, accommodation and leisure attractions contribute to differentiate European cities. We assume that royal family, as part of the historical construction and identity of the destination, is taking part on city branding (Gómez et al., 2018) and heritage for tourism experience seen as destination’ authenticity (Park et al., 2019).

Monaco was historically distinguished by its ability to derive financial and economic dividends from its economic specialization in luxury, casinos and properties inherited from its former princes (Porter et al., 2011). For decades, princes have ruled Monaco, and each ruling prince has the challenge of establishing a legacy. Prince Charles III authorized gaming for money and permitted the building of a casino on a rock renamed “Monte Carlo” – “the Mount of Charles” – in 1866 (Gay, 1996, 1999). From that legacy, Monaco achieved fame, reputation and economic development. Prince Albert I established the Oceanographic Museum in 1910 (Bezias, 2015). He was an early ecologist willing to raise awareness toward the preservation of the sea. Prince Rainier III subsequently married the Hollywood actress Grace Kelly, afterwards known as Grace de
Monaco, at a wedding that represented a worldwide event. The prince added a touch of elegance and prestige to the reputation of Monaco by enhancing real estate development (Grimaldi Forum, 2007), his political actions being focused on territorial expansion and advances on the sea (Fouilleron, 2016). The current ruler, Prince Albert II, is in search of a historical legacy and economic development in a post-casino period. Following in his grandfather’s footsteps, he emphasizes ecology and environmental concerns in the era of digital transformation.

A well-known destination in search of competitiveness

Monaco faces new challenges in the world of tourism activities. Among these is the decline of casino-driven tourism; tourists are seeking new, unseen and memorable experiences...
In 2017, Monaco announced its willingness to become a smart city. According to Cotton (2013, p. 33), “[t]he best results are gained if a smart city programs communication is included in overall city communication and marketing strategy.” Therefore, in order to achieve its goal, Monaco has to change its full visibility and reconsider its development strategy as part of institutional communication. The project is not only a source of digital transformation, but an opportunity for Monaco to brand its destination based on the ability to handle competitive and comparative advantages (Koo et al., 2016).

**Becoming smart**

The principality of Monaco’s understanding of the smart city concept relies both on IT and smart governance. Tourism was the first choice to initiate the process toward becoming a smart city, but political changes have altered this somewhat.

**Monaco’s vision of a smart city: technology and smart governance**

Upon taking office in February 2016, the Prime Minister of Monaco, Serge Telle, identified the digitalization of the territory of Monaco as a means of reconsidering its attractiveness and image. In particular, he wishes to give a healthy digital boost to the business environment. Smart city status has become a starting point of the government’s vision for digital transformation (Telle, 2018). In Monaco, the goal of becoming a smart city is a national strategy to enhance economic development and attractiveness.

In French, the translation of “smart” is “intelligent.” Thus, in Monaco – a French-speaking state – “smartness” is understood as the “sense of intelligence” that allows the city to enter into communion with the stakeholders of the place. These stakeholders include all of the actors who interact with the city: the government, residents (foreign and Monegasque), visitors (e.g. tourists, one-day visitors, meeting and event participants), daily commuters and socio-economic actors. The challenge of the smart city in Monaco is to imagine a pattern that allows all stakeholders to get in touch with the city and each other.

Due to its combination of small geographical scale and large economic and international scope, Monaco has the distinctive task to prove inclusive beyond its political borders. Such permeable boundaries lead to practical and conceptual issues. As a smart city, being more inclusive with autochthones means being inclusive for only 20 percent of the population. It highlights ambiguity regarding the traditional logic of a smart city that promotes its resident population’s inclusion on every part of city construction (Anand and Navío-Marco, 2018). Practically, to cope with the permeability of the boundaries, the smart city process in Monaco must rely on a top–down construction.

Moreover, smart governance appears to be a key factor for success. Surveys on smart cities have revealed that the smart city paradigm tends to underestimate governance dilemmas (Mejia and Bolivar, 2016). Indeed, the smart city requires a new, reticular and decentralized form of urban governance capable of integrating both the interdependencies of actors at a given level and interdependencies between levels (Bevir, 2013; Kooiman, 1993). Such cities thus develop productive interactions within and between networks of urban actors (Kourtit et al., 2012).

**Smart tourism as a first political choice; smart process as the second choice issued from consultative political orientation**

Mobility is the engine of the local economy at both the upstream (jobs) and downstream (visitors) levels, hence the development of the travel and tourism industries has become a logical outcome for public policy. The government started with tourism as a first choice to finance the digital turn from imported resources (tourists’ receipts). The focus on tourism was chosen to boost the digital
transformation of the economy. Indeed, the initial project was rooted in pure ambition: the argument was to ask Monaco’s 9m tourists to spend another EURO 10 during their trip. Including VAT (20 percent), the gain in receipts was approximately EURO 18m to help develop Monaco as a smart city. Even if this calculation was simplistic and the reality was far more complex, the goal was clear. Moreover, the government owns several tourism institutions whether totally or in part, including museums and exhibition halls. This dominant position makes it easy to gain access to massive amounts of data, which are at the heart of the smart development (Abella et al., 2017).

Smart tourism appears to be the way to enhance the tourism experience through innovation and to help strengthen destination competitiveness and value creation on digital roots. The Matrice Smart-City Monaco program (2017) was launched in October 2017 with the aim of providing a digital business model and solution. Start-up development was the first step in determining a new way to implement the tourist experience (Table II). Six start-ups established their commitment to Monaco during the first year of the Matrice program.

In March 2018, the election of the nationalist movement Primo stimulated a political turnaround in objectives. Indeed, the slogan “Monaco First” (Primo Monaco, 2019) shifted the priorities in favor of Monegasque citizens and put tourists at a second level. At the same time, it assumed that tourism receipts will no longer finance the smart city project. To understand Monaco’s strategy, we must distinguish the vision of the smart city from the motivations to continue, and reconsider the smart city concept. We deem the tourism-driven vision as the first choice and the state-driven vision as the second choice issued from consultative political orientation. As a consequence of this change in vision, the schedule of the Matrice program was reduced from three years to just one (Season 1: tourism, Season 2: inhabitants, Season 3: environment). The ambition is still to become smart, but the path now embraces a new horizon.

We could observe during the media coverage that Monaco has never claimed itself a smart destination or as a direct actor of smart tourism. Moreover, as far as official terminology is concerned, Monaco has shifted from smart city (Telle, 2018) to smart country (Castellini, 2018) and ultimately to smart nation (GouvMonaco, Gouvernement Princier, 2019). It reflects not only a continually evolving smart development but also the ambiguity to achieve smartness for a micro-state with open boundaries. Monaco is not a first mover and has found in Singapore an example to step in (National Research Foundation, 2018). The ambition of Monaco is to pursue the smart experience and to have a more comprehensive vision of the city, as Virtual Singapore does, Monaco aims to create a clear dynamic 3D digital representation of the city and to establish closer digital relationships with the Monegasque environment (collaborative data platform for public/private actors and inhabitants) with emphasis on ecological concerns (Fontanet, 2018). The digital ecosystem will enable users to develop applications, tools and services to enhance sustainable development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start-up name</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Outcomes after 1 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data sense/motion</td>
<td>Big data Car parking</td>
<td>How to collect, analyze and visualize data to support decision making?</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parked/X-Fabric</td>
<td>Car parking</td>
<td>How to improve car parking for garage and street parking?</td>
<td>X-Fabric became X-Tract tool to reduce the severity of accidents in the mountains Relocation in other Incubator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kheir</td>
<td>Waiting time Tourist information</td>
<td>How to make waiting time fun and interactive? How can interactions between visitors and tourist information be improved?</td>
<td>Closed Relocation in other Incubator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obside</td>
<td>Tourist routes</td>
<td>How to enrich the tourist experience during visits and tours?</td>
<td>Project completed and proposed to Monaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HappyWalks</td>
<td>Tying and bundling</td>
<td>How can we improve the continuity of sales of tourist services?</td>
<td>Standby with Monaco in seek of new business opportunities with other destinations Creation of a Start-up VUEGO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors
Smart Monaco branding

Tourism attractiveness in Monaco is first and foremost guided by the success and economic spinoffs associated with significant events: Grand Prix F1, International Circus Festival, Open Tennis and Spring Arts (Gay, 1998; Getz and Page, 2016). In Monaco, branding is a matter of institutional communication, i.e., official communication by the state of Monaco. Several new major communication campaigns have taken place since 2010 financed by the government and executed by governmental institutions. The targets are the international visitors (MICE, leisure) and, since recently, the inhabitants to make them proud to be a Monegasque in a more sustainable environment.

From 2010 to 2013, the Principality launched three institutional communication campaigns. On November 9, 2010 (International Day), an initial campaign was orchestrated to alter negative stereotypes of Monaco (e.g., casinos, tax havens, luxury) and aimed to reflect Monaco’s reality. The slogan “Monaco, a special role in the world” reinforced the campaign in October 2012 and September 2013. A new digital strategy completed the campaign with a new internet-portal, Monaco Channel, an official government Twitter account, and a new information magazine called MC[1].

From 2014 to 2017, the Monaco Convention Bureau launched a communication campaign intending to attract major events to make Monaco a leading destination in meeting, incentives, congress, exhibitions/events and business. Several posters were proposed to change perceptions of the destination, such as Monaco, a country where “Tailor-made is affordable,” where “Associations connect with great ideas,” where “You are not only at the top of your game on a tennis court,” where “Success is not only for celebrities” and where “Success is not just for Formula 1 drivers.”

Finally, in November 2018, the Tourist Authority, a governmental institution, presented its new territorial brand called “Visit Monaco” based on its traditional major activities (Convention Bureau, Cruise Bureau) and a newly branded “Monaco sustainable tourism.” The communication campaign “Green is the new glam” from January 2018 to early 2019 targeted a broad audience (visitors and inhabitants). The message affirmed Monaco’s position as a sustainable place. Today, all actions promoted by the principality must be environment-driven (Monaco land, Monaco wood charters, Oceanographic Museum, etc.) and enable visitors and inhabitants to develop a responsible and sustainable attitude.

Discussion

Monaco is an interesting empirical object because several conditions intersect to make it a smart city. The recent “smart Monaco” process reveals a global shift from an image historically based on casinos, glamour and cinema (e.g., the royal family and Princess Grace) to the creation of a new image and brand based on values (innovation, smart governance and environmental concern). In our opinion, Monaco is also an interesting conceptual object that requires some discussion about the three hypotheses previously shared:

H1. Being a smart city/destination is less a status than a process.

Smart tourism represents the digital transformation that is naturally imposed on the tourism industry for several years, combined with the capacity to absorb digital transformation and innovation in its strategic development. Indeed, when Monaco launches the Matrice program focused on tourism innovation, it aims to put these actions in a specific context. Monaco expected that the output of the technology-driven program would impose itself to the industry, whether through international applications (mobility, IoT) or private sector actions (hotels and various service providers). Therefore, we cannot define a smart destination as an exogenous and experiential improvement through technology (Xiang, 2018). A smart destination induces a complex ecosystem with numerous interactions and aims in creating resilient, sustainable and smart territory, as the smart city does.

As presented above, Monaco has never claimed to be a smart tourism destination nor a smart destination. However, when we look at the academic definitions of these two terms, Monaco fits to the elements that construct these definitions, by integrating technology and ecology in the development of its tourism experience (smart tourism), and by applying a consultation (via elections).
in the strategic orientations of the territory including tourism orientations (smart destination). However, the paradox is that the consultative dimension that contributes to making Monaco a smart destination reduces the importance of the territory’s tourism strategy. The terms smart tourism and smart destination can, therefore, be relevant only if they are self-proclaimed. Otherwise, we stay only on a conceptual vision of academics on innovative, technological and ecological strategies:

H2. A permeable state city challenges the boundaries between the city and the smart destination.

The critical point is the way in which innovation is driven, and the way that communication may help provide content to the frontiers between the smart cities and smart destinations. Smart destinations will become a strong foundation for the development of territories driven by the tourism industry. However, the tourism industry must evolve and support local development needs in order to gain autonomy from the city’s decisions. When Monaco present is ecological ambitions it has to apply to all the stakeholders involved: tourists, inhabitants and government. Communication and branding seem to be a point of interest enabling a volunteer confusion between the communication of the tourist destination and that of the city.

Regarding Monaco’s stakeholders’ interactions, two motivations are gathered at a destination level: on the one hand, the willingness of the territory (and its stakeholders) to receive tourists, and on the other hand, the willingness of tourists to visit the place (Kadri et al., 2011). A destination is not only a receptor for tourists and the tourism sector but it can also be animated by a strategy and a project for tourism development.

Smart destinations outline directions for achieving destination competitiveness and smart ecosystems. They pave the way for new IT-driven products, services, systems and experiential development. One important issue is that smart destinations offer the opportunity to residents and visitors to converge in a value co-creation process. This co-creation may be digital (platforms, application, IoT) but also embedded in material infrastructures that address all populations (public transportsations, restaurants, entertainment, shopping, services). In such a context, tourism is a booster that benefits everyone, hence the challenge is to create a superior on-place experience rooted in IT to deter anti-tourist sentiments. The smart destination leads to the necessary cohabitation between inhabitants and tourists:

H3. The conceptualization of the smart city requires a broader definition of who its engaged stakeholders are.

We cannot imagine a smart destination without smart governance, which is intrinsically complex. Indeed, the concept of smart governance forces city authorities to rethink, change and improve their governance routines, procedures and processes. Smart city governments have a user-centered vision in which citizens and other stakeholders are treated as key assets for the development and implementation of smart cities (Kourtit et al., 2012). The focus on stakeholder networks, on the complexity and governance, implies, above all, a recognition that not all actors are equal (Zeghni and Fabry, 2019). This is mainly true for visitors, which are stakeholders for Monaco as a destination, but do not influence the strategic choices of Monaco. In that sense, they are not equal to inhabitants but they play an important role in implementing general smart city goals.

According to Femenia-Serra et al. (2019), the key role of the smart tourist is as a data generator for smart destination management. Concerning the activities carried out by tourism, the role of the tourist in Season 1 of the Matrice program could be positioned in this configuration through the development of technologies. However, with the new communication campaign “Green is the new glam,” the destination is less focused on the tourist becoming connected than actively involving them in understanding a sustainable ecosystem. The role of Monaco as a destination is to raise awareness of the impacts of activities on the environment. The critical point of Monaco’s communication is on its ability to make the smart city accessible and affordable for the general public. The environment is one essential axis.

Conclusion

This case study is interesting in that it raises more questions than it answers. Although the smart strategy remains in its early stages, the model reveals some paradoxes, and some questions are
still unanswered. Prince Albert II is known for his stance in favor of the protection of the environment, especially the oceans. However, Monaco is trying to attract new tourists from long-haul countries whose private journeys are responsible for substantial global gas emissions (Gössling et al., 2018). Therefore, how is it possible to attract international tourists to luxury hospitality and fight against greenhouse gas emissions according to Prince Albert II’s directions? How can Monaco develop international tourism and limit interactions with the local community in such a small place? One way is to ensure economic attractiveness driven by data and the ocean. However, this remains a work in progress.

New priorities put citizens at the center of the process. A smart city needs to gain legitimacy among the population, but this population, like other stakeholders, must also fit the smart city strategy. Although the smart city refers to a political choice, one cannot create a smart city without the involvement of stakeholders, and a smart city cannot be set up in a vacuum. In other words, a smart city needs collective understanding of what is vision and motivations for the government. The case of Monaco is interesting in that there are many stakeholders and they do not necessarily live in the city/country. This makes the case of Monaco particularly complex and specific. To conclude, we can argue that the case of Monaco leads to greater entanglement of general political agendas and tourism policy. Our theoretical understanding of the relationship between smart city and smart tourism development is thus reinforced.

Note
1. Journal De l’Administration (JDA), Center de presse, Principauté de Monaco, n°50, septembre 2013.

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Further reading


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The co-management and stakeholders theory as a useful approach to manage the problem of overtourism in historical cities – illustrated with an example of Krakow

Jaroslaw Plichta

Abstract

Purpose – The development of tourism is emerging in some places of the world’s destinations and the problem of overtourism is an expression of the mechanisms and behaviours of entities in the public space that is a city or region. For many years, on the practical and theoretical ground, various ways of describing these phenomena have been sought. These include the theory of stakeholders that combines approaches that refer to strategic management, value-chain theory, resource-based theory, CSR concepts or those embedded in the institutional concept, game theory and the theory of property rights. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper discusses the overtourism problem from the point of view of selected aspects of stakeholder theory on the example of one of the most popular cities in the world – Krakow, where for several years there has been a discussion about overtourism and the effects of this phenomenon for residents, enterprises and other stakeholders. It can be hypothesised that the stakeholder theory and co-management can be an inspiration to seek a solution to this growing problem.

Findings – The result of the discussed problems is the indication of the role of stakeholders in the appearance of the overtourism phenomenon and the protection of activities aimed at implementing the co-management concept at the local and international level.

Research limitations/implications – Here are not many research results and the empirical data describing the problem from point of view stakeholder theory connected with overtourism. It is also the problem of overlapping different approach and theories. This shows possibilities to grow of research in this field.

Practical implications – Stakeholders theory help to solve many problems in corporate management as well as in public institutions. It gives the possibilities to include in analysis different social groups and entities. This kind of research and approach could be used for creating of the regional policies and sustainable development. An important role to play in the process of creating co-operative structures between stakeholders has co-managerial and academic environments. They can be a place for both discussions, conducting research and a meeting place for thematic groups solving specific problems.

Social implications – Overtourism is a problem concerning various areas of functioning of historical cities. They are obliged to provide and protect the cultural heritage of all humanity. The theory of stakeholders and the co-management concept create the possibility of managing the overtourism phenomenon. They have, therefore, an important social aspect. Their goal is to cooperate and integrate activities around key social and economic problems at the local, national and international levels.

Originality/value – It is an adaptation and searching of methods for describing the new phenomena in tourism and cities development. It is an attempt at a holistic approach to problems related to the common space and resources owned by various stakeholders.

Keywords Overtourism, Co-management, Institutional approach, Stakeholders theory

Paper type Case study
fact that 2017 was declared by the United Nations as the year of sustainable tourism development (the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development). UNWTO – the World Tourism Organization at the United Nations in 2018, in the course of conducted academic and environmental discussions, defined overtourism, as “the impact of tourism on a destination, [...] and/or the quality of visitors experiences in a negative way” (UNWTO, 2018, p. 4).

Protests of residents of many European historical cities, such as Barcelona, Dubrovnik and Venice led many governments, academia, and community organisations to diagnose the problem and develop tools to limit it. In addition to the diagnosis of negative effects, they indicate the key role of stakeholders and the need for their cooperation in order to ensure further but sustainable development of tourism. Ad hoc solutions in the form of prohibitions and restrictions only will not solve this problem in the long run. Due to the complexity of the issue and crossing many business solutions must be comprehensive, institutional, accepted and become part of the behaviour of individual stakeholders.

The aim of the paper is to present the issue of overtourism as an institutional problem causing various transaction costs and external and managerial effects at the level of stakeholders operating directly on the tourist market, e.g. hotels, and indirectly related to this market, e.g. developers. The paper is of a conceptual nature and is based on a review of the literature on cooperative processes and management of entities in the natural and institutional environment in the face of globalisation phenomena on the tourist market. The city of Krakow will be an illustration of this problem as one of the historical European cities experiencing this problem. The main hypothesis of the paper is the assumption that institutional solutions based on cooperation and co-management between stakeholders can help reduce the negative effects of overtourism in historical cities. Based on the symptoms and experience of other cities, Krakow municipal government has begun to create a long term policy included interests of the main stakeholders (Walas et al., 2018, p. 6).

2. Overtourism as an institutional problem

The effect of overtourism is the sum of many external effects of globalisation, which affect not only the most-visited historical cities but all unique places on earth. They are both human creations and natural goods which are usually impossible to reproduce and replicate. Hence their uniqueness and pricelessness. The development of modern information and communication technologies, an increase in the number of population and the wealth of some societies, as well as the reduction of travel costs have resulted in increased mobility on a global scale. Part of this movement is tourism, which does not only refer to the search for rest places but broadly understood development of leisure time and such goals as business or religious tourism. The development of the internet and electronic media has revealed the wealth of cultural goods and natural resources attractive from the tourist point of view. Many countries and societies have also recognised the possibility of earning income in a way that does not require additional investment. During the many years of the twentieth century, the supply of various tourist attractions, often just discovered, exceeded the demand for them. Many of them were not perceived as attractions from today’s point of view, e.g. glaciers or inaccessible areas, such as deserts or caves. In the postmodern era, cultural resources and natural resources have become a mass commodity. Individualisation of needs, striving to achieve ever-greater positive experiences by discovering and experiencing previously unknown emotional states by an increasing number of consumers of free time has inspired many people and companies to offer new services based on unique resources. They often have properties of public or common goods.

Natural resources – natural resources and cultural resources are usually public goods, that is, goods for which it is difficult to establish individual property rights and exclude a social group from access to them. Thus, they constitute both heritage and a commitment that all society has to protect, e.g. monuments or water resources. Some valuable assets from the tourist point of view have the status of club goods with limited access, e.g. temporary one, and private goods remaining solely in the possession of individual physical or legal entities. Many institutionalists perceive in the establishment, granting, transfer and protection of property rights a fundamental factor in the formation of transaction costs and, hence, ineffectiveness of the exchange
processes (Demsetz, 2002; Gordon, 1994; Pejovich, 1990). This also applies to tourism as a
global market characterised by the dominance of services corresponding to the concept of
service dominant logic (Vail and Hultkrantz, 2000, p. 223; Vargo and Lusch, 2016).

The institution of property rights defines the principles according to which various social groups
and individuals use resources and what duties they have towards them, as defined by the
society, e.g. maintaining historic buildings in good condition. The space of historical cities is a
mixture of resources with a heterogeneous structure of property rights, which causes a number
of planning and management problems (Webster, 2007). This means different approaches to the
issue of both protecting and making these resources available to tourists and benefiting
from them. Collective action within shared resources creates conflict situations which are
described by institutionalists as, e.g. the effect of common pasture – common-pool
resources (Hardin, 1968; Ostrom et al., 1999), prisoner’s dilemma, the problem of a free rider,
etc. (Olson, 2009; Stroup, 2000). These situations result mainly from:

- the difference between social benefits resulting from learning about and consuming by tourists
cultural achievements and financial benefits associated with the maintenance and protection
of cultural property by their owners;

- desire to internalise the benefits (free riders’ problem) and externalisation of costs (the so-
called external effects) by private owners, resulting from tourist traffic, e.g. by tourist offices,
Airbnb.com, restaurants, etc.;

- unequal access or exclusion of various stakeholders from the public space due to limited
common resources, e.g. for tourists, residents, business entities, etc.; and

- different, accepted time perspective regarding the implementation of goals and
strategies for the operation of stakeholders managing the offer of goods and services to
tourists, e.g. short and long-term goals, development strategies for private companies
and municipalities.

Already in the 1960s, Hardin saw dangers of common ownership calling it “the tragedy
of the commons” (Hardin, 1968). The general Hardin model based on the common pasture
dilemma was the basis for the description of many social phenomena, such as the problem of
acid rain (Wilson, 1984), globalisation and crime in cities (Findlay, 2005), or the prisoner’s
dilemma in the context of international cooperation (Snidal, 1985), as well as the problem of
misusing and overusing tourism resources (Bimonte, 2008). Overtourism is a typical
management problem of the public and private property rights, e.g. between tourists’ and
residents’ right to use common space. We could give several examples to explain this
economic problem:

1. Common pasture – a problem how to share limited assets by all participants. Cultural assets
are limited but commercial entities would like to use them more and more. It leads to losses
for all participants.

2. Prisoner dilemma, e.g. a quasi-cooperative game for resources between municipal
government and private companies, both parties establish their gain and benefits and apply
different strategies to earn as much as possible. They calculate their own gains and losses
and choose the best strategy (game option). We should think, by the way, about the positive
(investment of private company in public goods, e.g. streets) and negative (garbage and
pollution) external effects of this game.

3. Free rider problem – e.g. using by tourists the same public spaces (parks, streets) as
residents without having to pay the tax or exploiting common space and public goods,
e.g. fresh air or water. The guests of Airbnb clients often overuse the silence at night when
residents sleep.

The phenomenon of overtourism reveals conflicts between stakeholders not only at the local
level, but the conflict has moved to the national and international levels, thus expanding the
number of entities influencing this phenomenon. The problem of overtourism is a manifestation
of excessive consumption of goods to which property rights remain unallocated. It occurs
in a situation of disproportion between the number of resources and the demand for them.
The price mechanism that allows to establish the point of balance is imperfect because of the heterogeneity of goods, their low adaptability, the difficulty to determine quality, diversity of consumer preferences, operators’ opportunism and information asymmetry. Inefficiencies on this market are aggravated by various external effects in the form of pollution, noise, increased crime, accelerated consumption of public infrastructure and tensions among various social groups (Milano, 2017; Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018; UNWTO, 2018; Walmsley, 2017). That is why on this market there are permanent states of imbalance and congestion. Solving this problem is the result of phenomena and real processes that lead to their formalisation in the form of various institutional solutions. Their evolution is moving towards internationalisation, meaning international cooperation between local unions and the structures of historical city stakeholders, as well as lobbying international tourist organisations towards establishing general rules of conduct for all participants of the tourist market (Figure 1).

---

**Figure 1** Evolution and integration of stakeholders’ cooperation towards solving the problem of overtourism

- **Informal and ad hoc activities at the local level**
- **Integration of activities and coordination at the level of local stakeholders**
- **Formalization and partial solutions on the side of municipalities**
- **Internationalization, formal and informal, exchange of experience and solutions**
- **Creating general rules for the conduct of all market participants and co-management at the international and local level**

*Source: Own work*
3. The role of stakeholders in the management of common space

Research conducted for several years and discussions on the phenomenon of overtourism on the international scale indicate the important role of stakeholders in the processes of solving local problems having local causes (Aas et al., 2005; Jamal and Stronza, 2009; Yang et al., 2013). The theory of stakeholders has a multidisciplinary character and is a universal perspective referring to structural and functional aspects of relations between various actors of exchange processes. According to R. Phillips, stakeholders are groups of entities that are obliged by participating in related production and exchange processes to cooperate in order to ensure their own activity and development. This rather general definition gives a wide range of applications but it is also a source of various interpretations (Phillips et al., 2003). It is increasingly an element of considerations regarding shaping the strategies of entities entering into relationships and building competitive advantage (Harrison et al., 2010). It takes into account both strategic, ethical and institutional aspects (Delmas and Toffel, 2004; Phillips et al., 2003). Shaping relationships between entities involved in the processes of exchange and creating value in public space also plays an important role in the division and redistribution of resources gathered together and ensuring sustainable development (Carlsson-Kanyama et al., 2008; Jamal and Stronza, 2009). It follows from the general theory of exchange that the needs of each exchange subject are met by exchanging values between them according to specific rules (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1987). Therefore, they create different structures for the coordination of exchange processes and co-creation of values in the form of enterprises and organisations aimed at increasing the efficiency of their operations. The reason for the creation of enterprises and various types of institutions are transaction costs (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1975). This brings the stakeholder theory closer to the concept of resource theory (Barney et al., 2001), to the value chain concept (Porter and Kramer, 2011) and to the concept of co-creation, in which achieving individual benefits of individual entities takes place through the exchange and co-creation of values with other entities (Grönroos and Voima, 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Rashid et al., 2013). The criterion of the co-creation of values is an element connecting various entities with each other around common values and ways of their implementation. Thus, each entity can remain in different dependencies and network connections with other entities by creating overlapping configurations called multiple stakeholder orientation profile (Greenley et al., 2005, p. 1484). This creates complicated, horizontal and volatile dependency systems. This causes major problems at the management level that are the source of conflicts and inefficiencies as well as instability on the market (Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018). An example of this is the phenomenon of overtourism where on the one hand there is a community and conflicts of interest among various groups of stakeholders, e.g. between inhabitants of historical cities and tourists renting flats via Airbnb.com or booking.com. In the past, most of the stakeholders cooperating in the common space of historical cities, such as residents, tourists, business entities or public institutions, came from the closest regional or national economic and social circle. The process of building cooperation structures among these entities was often natural, bottom-up and based on similar structures of values and related interests, for example, the owners of companies were at the same time inhabitants of cities and national tourists prevailed.

Globalisation processes and a more free flow of resources, including capital and people, have resulted in changes in the ownership structure and the inflow of entities with diverse goals, often representing different value systems, e.g. large international corporations, retail chains, temporary workers, developers or foreign tourists (Coca-Stefaniai et al., 2009). Not only has the circle of stakeholders expanded, but also their possibilities of influence (power) and the approach to the common space have. Very often, the existing formal and informal institutions as structures of coordination and co-creation of values have become ineffective. The dynamic influx of tourists to historical cities has revealed this institutional and managerial problem at the level of common spheres of the activity of many entities involved in this process. As noted earlier, it has a character that goes beyond the local framework and is linked to the transfer of the offer of local cultural resources and stakeholders’ activity to the international level. Therefore, this problem requires searching for methods for building information links and cooperation between stakeholders in the new conditions of the global tourism market.
4. Co-management as a management tool for the overtourism phenomenon

The co-management concept is closely related to the problem of managing common goods and cooperation between stakeholders at the micro- and macro-economic level. On the basis of a number of definitions, it can be said that co-management or collaborative management boils down to creating such an institutional framework (institutional environment, institutional matrix) that will ensure optimal division and delegation of property rights to shared resources, enabling cooperation in effective and efficient management. The system assumes making decisions that bring benefits, as well as costs and responsibility on the part of all stakeholders (Carroll, 1991) (Table I).

Co-management is a hybrid form of cooperation located between the market exchange based on autonomous decisions of independent entities and a hierarchical, centralised structure subordinating all the power over common goods to one decision-making centre (Webster, 2007, p. 84). It is a horizontal continuum between state management or even a community of countries, e.g. the EU, and management at the level of an independent subject, and requires continuous adaptation processes based on learning and gaining experience in the conditions of uncertainty and complexity of social interactions and building trust between entities (Figure 2).

The transition to the adaptive co-management also points to the need for a variety of learning strategies to understand social signals and problems (Armitage et al., 2009). The complexity of the co-management concept is also complicated because of (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005, p. 67):
1. structure and system which is the state;
2. the complex nature of social life;
3. continuous interactions between factors within the existing system;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I Sample definitions of co-management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of co-management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term is given to governance systems that combine state control with local, decentralised decision making and accountability and which, ideally, combine the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements, and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2 Numerous possible roles to bridging organisations in co-management</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arena for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging science-local knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging local-government institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-producing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing information and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building vision and goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Berkes (2009)
4. diversity and strength of external factors;
5. the complexity of the co-management process structure as a governance system;
6. ways of adaptation through the learning and problem-solving mechanism; and
7. variability of the ecosystem supplying resources under management.

In practice, we deal with many entities representing different interests, having different power and social legitimacy to perform their tasks within the framework of the established social order and institutional environment. More often they have the form of network connections at various levels of hierarchy (Table II).

In order to create a partnership based on trust, it is necessary to popularise the idea of co-management, which is indicated by the adaptive approach through education and creation at the level of management structures of all co-managers, who on the levels of local public institutions and tourist organisations are currently called destination or city managers (Bratika et al., 2016; Plchta, 2014).

5. Factors influencing the emerging phenomenon of overtourism in Krakow

The problem of excessive inflow of tourists does not apply to all European cities, but mainly to those that offer specific cultural and historical resources. Due to their uniqueness, they have a much more limited ability to absorb loads, which is the effect of an increasing number of tourists compared to other destinations. However, it should be noted that also in the case of these cities, by not all of the stakeholders excessive tourist traffic is perceived as a problem – certainly not by those who are beneficiaries of this phenomenon. Krakow’s reputation is also built by awarded distinctions, such as: Meetings Star Award 2015 – the first place in the category Convention Centers for the Congress Center ICE, the prestigious prize “Zoover – The Best European City Trip” awarded four times, “Top 10 Large European Cities of the Future– Business Friendliness” and the title of the European Capital of Gastronomy Culture 2019 awarded by the European Gastronomic Academy. In addition, the satisfaction of the industry and the loyalty rate towards the city, the net promoter score placed on the level of 79.1 per cent., indicates that Krakow has built a strong tourist brand (Walas et al., 2018, p. 5).

Krakow is a place that, due to its location, is the most popular destination in Central Europe and attracts tourists from all over the world. In 2017, Krakow was visited by 12.9 million tourists. For comparison, it is expected that Barcelona will be visited by approx. 30 million tourists in 2020 (Milano, 2017, p. 6). It is estimated that in 2017 tourists spent over PLN5.5bn (ca1.2 billion Euros) in Krakow. In 2017, the number of people visiting Kraków increased by almost 6.2 per cent, and amounted to 12,900,000, while the number of domestic guests increased by 6.5 per cent, and foreign numbers by 5.2 per cent and amounted to 9,850,000 and 3,505,000 people. The number of tourists (overnight guests) in Krakow in 2017 amounted to 9,100,000 and it was an increase of 7.1 per cent (in 2016 – 4.3 per cent). The increase was related to both domestic tourists – 7.7 per cent (compared to 3.9 per cent in 2016) and foreign tourists – 5.7 per cent (compared to 5.2 per cent in 2016) (Table III).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Similarities and differences between co-management, adaptive management and adaptive co-management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linkages</strong></td>
<td>Co-management: Primary focus: vertical institutional linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal scope</strong></td>
<td>Short to medium: tend to produce snapshots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational level</strong></td>
<td>Bridging between local and government levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity building focus</strong></td>
<td>Resource users and communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Berkes (2009)
The share of tourists or overnight guests in the number of visitors to Krakow in 2017 was 70 per cent. A larger percentage was represented by tourists from abroad – 92 per cent (in 2016 – 91 per cent), while domestic guests – 64% (in 2015 – 63 per cent). In 2017, 35 per cent of all guests declared their next trip to Krakow and 90 per cent would recommend Krakow to friends (Krakow Municipal Office, 2018).

In recent years, the structure of transport used by tourists visiting Krakow has also changed. Among foreign tourists, there has been an increase in the share of air transport (an increase from 54.6 per cent in 2015 to 57.7 per cent in 2017) and regular transport offered by international and domestic operators (an increase from 5.6 per cent in 2015 to 9.3 per cent in 2017). A similar trend appears among domestic tourists who are increasingly giving up cars and coaches from tourist offices to aircrafts, trains, and regular bus lines. The city attracts tourists not only with its unique historic complex with unique historical objects but also with its unique atmosphere. In addition to unquestionable tourist attractions and a rich offer of cultural attractions and events, it is also a place of work and education. Kraków is one of the most important academic and scientific centres in Poland (23 institutions of higher education, including five universities). This affects directly the supply of qualified staff for companies operating on the market, including the modern business services sector, including modern technologies as well as the research and development sector (according to Tholons, Top 100 Outsourcing Destinations 2017, Kraków is ranked first in Poland, second in Europe and 8th in the world). Among the main purposes of foreign tourists’ arrivals in Krakow in 2017, the most frequently mentioned are: visiting monuments (34.7 per cent), resting (19.1 per cent), visiting friends and relatives (7.8 per cent) and entertainment (7.3 per cent). Arrivals of foreign tourists are arrivals mainly for a few days, hence they usually spend 2–3 nights (29.6 per cent) or 4–7 nights (44.8 per cent). Domestic tourists’ visits are shorter. Almost half of the stays are from 1–3 nights (47.3 per cent). These are usually weekend or business trips or participation in conferences and congresses. This destination is already provided by 2.7 per cent of domestic tourists and 3.8 per cent of foreign tourists. Most tourists, both domestic and foreign ones, organise their own arrival (78.2 per cent domestic tourists, 62.2 per cent foreign tourists in 2017) (Krakow Municipal Office, 2018).

Krakow is among the cities in which innovation and new technologies are supported and it is one of the largest start-up centres in Poland. It should be emphasised that an important source of visitors to Krakow are people visiting the city for business purposes. This results in the systematic development of the so-called meeting market, and when it comes to business meetings, Krakow is becoming the leading city in Poland (Borodako et al., 2014). Krakow Balice Airport handled 5.8 million passengers and recorded a 17 per cent increase compared to the previous year. The forecasts of traffic at Balice airport show an increasing amount of passengers from more than 5 million in the year 2018 to 12 million in the year 2036.

However, it should be emphasised that the structure of tourist traffic and thus the impact of various groups of visitors are quite diverse.

For many years, the majority of stakeholders and local governments have noticed benefits in the development of tourism. This is still the case of Krakow, among others because the tourism receipts account for about 8 per cent of the city’s GDP. The estimated revenues of Krakow due to the arrival of tourists have almost doubled in the last few years from PLN2.9 m in 2011 to nearly 5.5 million in 2017. The tourism sector is responsible for creating 40,000 jobs, which means that every tenth place of work is related to servicing them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table III</th>
<th>Tourist traffic in Krakow in 2013–2017 (in thousands of people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In all</td>
<td>7,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>2,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Krakow Municipal Office (2018)
Krakow, as an agglomeration, accepts nearly 200,000 commuters to schools and universities daily. Kraków occupies a leading position among Polish cities in terms of the number of flats completed. For several years, the sale of residential premises in Krakow has been growing steadily. It seems, however, that in 2017 there is an upward trend in terms of the number of transactions on this market, which is not due to the lack of demand in the market, but due to the limitations resulting mainly from the lack of investment plots. On the secondary real estate market, unflagging demand was also observed, which confirms the volume of transactions. It seems that an important reason for stimulating this market is the treatment of buying a flat as an investment purchase - in the case of having free means the purchase is treated as an alternative to a bank deposit. Similarly to the primary market, a significant part of buyers are investors who buy flats for rent (Table IV).

Krakow is among the cities in which one can observe the dynamic development of the short-term rental market. One of the reasons that undoubtedly affects the development of this market is an increase in the number of visitors - mainly tourists. According to the AirDNA analytical company report which analyses short-term lease carried out through Airbnb Kraków is one of the cities with the biggest number of offers of such a lease (nearly 5.5 thousand). The next cities are Warsaw (4.8 thousand) and Tricity – 3.1 thousand. The choice of Krakow as the place most often chosen for a short-term stay, is also confirmed by Wimdu’s competitive Airbnb service. After entering the word “Krakow” on the popular Booking.com website which allows you to book accommodation all over the world we have more than 2,500 entries. Due to the predictions that short-term rental will still be popular in the city, there is a constantly growing interest of investors in the purchase of even entire buildings for flats rented for a short period. It should be noted that the rapidly growing number of flats for temporary lease affects both the decline in availability and an increase in the prices of premises that can be rented in the long term.

Therefore, it is difficult to see in excessive numbers of tourists only various negative phenomena affecting the quality of life of residents and the cost of maintaining infrastructure and public space. In some European cities, due to a large number of tourists and their nocturnal activity, there are business entities that dedicate their offer to this group of tourists, thus one can speak about the so-called night-time economy. Due to the development of this phenomenon, there appeared a necessity to solve various types of emerging problems and conflicts - thus, there was a need to create a so-called institution of night mayors, whose task is to support night-time industries and mitigate the negative effects of their activities, such as outdoor events, concerts or 24-hour clubs of gastronomic establishments (Walas et al., 2018, p. 16).

6. Stakeholders in the private-public space of Krakow and co-management possibilities of ovetourism phenomenon

Theoretical considerations and the short description of the city of Krakow as a destination for an increasing number of tourists and the emerging negative effects of this phenomenon indicate the need not only to discuss but also to seek institutional and system solutions to manage this problem on a local scale. The importance of this problem for Krakow is emphasised by the fact of creating a project entitled Historical Cities 3.0, whose main goal is cooperation and discussion of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property form</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, incl.</td>
<td>9,363</td>
<td>11,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sale and rent</td>
<td>7,972</td>
<td>10,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm’s property apartments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Krakow Municipal Office (2018)
problems, experiences, solutions used in historical cities, taking into account different conditions and searching for common tools for observing tourism. That is why, Krakow has proposed other thematic debates in the two-year cycle and closer, permanent cooperation in this area. In 2018, the opening conference was devoted to the relations of residents and visitors, and the search for answers to the question about the possibility of reconciling aspects such as taking advantage of the stay according to your own wishes with a sense of comfort and an appropriate quality of life for residents (Walas et al., 2018, p. 7).

Krakow begins to experience the effects of the influence of the historical factors caused by the phenomenon of overtourism typical for the majority of cities. They bring both benefits and costs to individual stakeholders. The main groups of stakeholders in Krakow include: residents; commuters to work and study from outside the city, tourists; the Kraków municipality as the entity managing the common property; entities owned by the municipality of Kraków managing key areas such as: public transport, water supply, heating system, etc.; schools and other education entities for children and youth; State Treasury and government institutions, e.g. Voivodeship Office or the police and public institutions such as universities, theatres; social organisations and associations; churches and religious associations; business entities of natural and legal persons, in each group of stakeholders we have a very large number of entities with different preferences, powers, responsibilities, and strategies. Due to the structure of land ownership in Krakow, the largest role is played by natural persons, including residents, the state treasury and the municipality of Kraków. A relatively large share of the property is held by churches and religious associations, which is particularly true of many historic buildings in Krakow. The most frequently mentioned are business entities operating in various sectors (Table V).

The structure of land ownership reflects the complexity and thus the difficulty in creating a coherent co-management mechanism. This is particularly true of private persons and enterprises, which usually do not create more organised structures, such as chambers or associations, which could be partners in the discussion and development of a common model of cooperation in the field of tourism policy. In many cases, legal entities and public entities are characterised by a divergence of interests, goals of action and internal management structures and organisational culture, e.g. churches, and international corporations.

### 7. The proposal of the general process and model of managing overtourism with regard to the stakeholders' theory and co-management theory

The overtourism problem is in the early stage of development. The historical cities start with the managing it. The given examples of partial solving some negative effects show that we do not have any comprehensive solutions in the form of tools or methods. In addition, the problem of overtourism involves both local and international entities. This requires institutional arrangement and co-management both at the vertical level (stakeholders at the international level) and at the horizontal level (stakeholders at the local level). To build one general model for all historical cities we need to take into account that each of them exists in a different institutional environment. Each historical city has its own path of dependence, as well. Krakow is an example of the city that is just

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of ownership</th>
<th>Area per hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural person</td>
<td>14,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>6,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The urban commune of Krakow</td>
<td>6,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches and religious communities</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counties</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voivodeship (province)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Krakow Municipal Office (2018)
beginning to recognise the overtourism problem. Therefore, there are not comprehensive research data and the awareness of stakeholders.

The overtourism phenomenon is one of many issues that happen in the public space. So we use the strategic approach to resolve this problem as well. What is significant and particular in this area is the global context that requires the creation of a multi-level institutional surface, such as historical cities’ network and a cross-dimensional one, such as a common strategy and agreement with stakeholders operating in each value chains or sectors e.g. hotels, transports, restaurants, etc. The experiences and examples from many European countries show that the crucial role in these processes is played by universities, NGOs, e.g. think thanks (Figure 3).

Building co-operative structures require, in accordance with the sociological concept of Blau’s intermediary values to create a map of stakeholders, diagnose their needs, expectations and represented value systems and, consequently, identify common and key areas related to overtourism. This would allow to create different configurations of thematic teams coordinating cooperation among stakeholders. We could point to three levels of the institutional and natural environment: local (micro), regional (mezzo) and global (macro). The core role is played by communal and regional public entities that are responsible for public space management. With regard to the role of public entities in common space as the agents of public goods, universities and NGO’s should be assigned the role of integrators and facilitators of managing these institutional processes. At the regional level, nowadays we have a lot of municipal associations operating as networks, e.g. the National League of Cities or www.myeuropeancity.eu. We can now see such that such an institutional process occurs among old historical cities in Europe struggling with overtourism, pollution, transportation problems, etc. They often have similar institutional and natural local environment. It helps them to cooperate and build an informal and formal structure. It is very important to build, first at the local levels, the group of stakeholders like

Figure 3 The general model of managing the overtourism problem as an institutional and management issue

Source: Own work
hotels, restaurants, retail, and services that should include both local and international entities operated at the local level. It helps to work out common goals and rules for creating basic operational programmes. At the regional level, we have already bigger corporations and organisations that operate internationally. Each interest group should have its own representation on this level. This role is to coordinate and resolve the problem of overtourism taking into account whole sectors and national interests. The global level enquires involving global entities and takes into account global ecological, technological, social and political issues, e.g. global warming, the role of global private corporations, etc.

With regard to the general model and the current awareness of the stakeholders, the process of organising the first steps in managing the overtourism phenomenon at the local and regional levels is presented below.

Stages of creating a co-management process of overtourism phenomenon:

1. initial diagnosis of the problem, presentation of the main assumptions and stages of the co-management of overtourism project;

2. acquiring partners and support from the media and conducting an educational and informational campaign;

3. conducting research on the structure of stakeholders, preferences, and expectations, the degree of integration, value structure and organisational culture;

4. development of results and presentation of common problems that could be the basis for building thematic teams, grouping stakeholders in various configurations;

5. training and building a team of co-managers representing stakeholders;

6. developing a plan of activities and working meetings, setting goals and deadlines for their implementation; and

7. coordination, evaluation, and evaluation of works and improvement of the co-management process.

Such an action requires the education of each stakeholder or the representatives of a group of managers who would be responsible for developing common solutions at the local and international level and apply these solutions within their own management structures. One of important organisational problems in this type of work is the question of dominance and equal treatment of all partners. A good solution may be to conduct this type of work of thematic teams at universities and adopt a rotating system of chairing the teams by a representative of each stakeholder. This would ensure impartiality and a real sense of an impact on key findings. Thematic groups would give the majority the opportunity to exchange information and agree on positions at the international level, both on the part of historical cities and individual international stakeholders.

8. Conclusions

The phenomenon of overtourism brings a number of problems with it, which due to the global nature of modern economy and social relations require a comprehensive action both at the local and international level. The city of Krakow is experiencing the first effects of this phenomenon, which is reflected in statistical data and few press publications regarding residents’ opinions. Krakow as one of famous historic cities in the world has seen the symptoms of the overtourism problem typical for other historic cities in Europe. Therefore, facing the symptoms of overtourism by a “new” participant on the tourism market like Krakow, it would like to develop the way to overcome the overtourism problem in the future. In 2018 Krakow started with a project Historical Cities 3.0 that aims to work out a comprehensive development policy both at the local, regional and international level, including interests of different stakeholders. Tourism is one of a crucial source of income for historical cities. For many years many countries, international organisations and historical cities have been looking for ways to diagnose this phenomenon and develop methods to solve it. Due to the complex nature of this problem, which concerns various spheres of social, political and
economic life, one should look for interdisciplinary concepts and methods that combine general cultural, ecological and institutional issues, as well as the interests of individual entities. It seems that the overtourism problem is not so important as investment, transportation, education, ecology and welfare of residents. But it focuses on all core problems of historical cities. The number of factors and entities which take part in these social and economic processes prompt the municipal government to find methods in a comprehensive way to help resolve this problem. One of the proposals is the theory of stakeholders, developed for many years, and the co-management concept that combine the adaptive and integrative approach in management. The stakeholders and co-management theory could bring not only inspiration but also useful methods considering the institutional and international or global context of overtourism. The general scheme of action proposed in the paper, which aims to develop a mechanism for solving problems related to the overtourism phenomenon, requires further research and conceptual work that makes use of existing scientific and practical achievements in this field.

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